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Dreams, farewells, and nightmares...p.10

Forgive us our debts.....p.13

59th year of publication

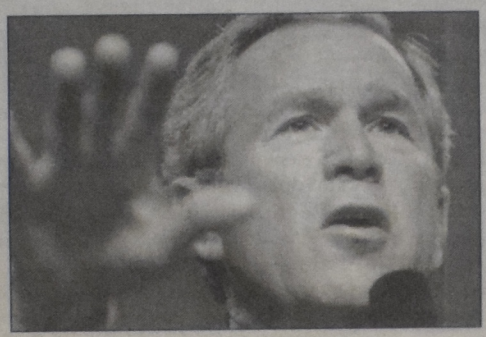
Two nations? The faith factor in the U.S. elections

Harry der Nederlanden

The U.S. elections were watched with great interest all around the world. What happens in the White House has repercussions far beyond U.S. borders, well into Canada. *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, sponsored a letter-writing campaign that had Englishmen writing Americans to urge them to vote against Bush. Which candidate would be better for Canada in terms of trade disputes, however, was doubtful.

The U.S. elections were of even greater interest this year to Christians because religion figured large in the campaign and in the outcome, according to analysts.

"Two nations under God," declared Thomas Friedman, a columnist for the *New York Times*. "This election was tipped because of an outpouring of support for George Bush by people who don't just favor different policies than I do – they favor a whole different kind of America." Friedman, a writer who is usually even-tempered and balanced, voiced the despair of a great many liberals who have long lived with the assumption that most Americans think pretty much as they do. They seem to find it incredible that so many Americans have said no to their vision of the future.



Friedman's response to the Bush victory, though shrill for him, was moderate in comparison to many others. More than one commentator lamented, "The dream of a secular, liberal democracy is lost! The theocrats are coming!"

Maureen Dowd, another columnist for the *NYT*, shrilled: "The president got re-elected by dividing the country along fault lines of fear, intolerance, ignorance and religious rule. He doesn't want to heal rifts; he wants to bring any riffraff who disagree to heel."

She went on to accuse him of conducting a jihad in America so he can fight one in Iraq, "drawing a devoted flock of evangelicals, or 'value-voters,' as they call themselves, to the polls by opposing abortion, suffocating stem cell research and supporting a constitutional amendment against gay marriage."

Gary Wills, a prominent Catholic intellectual who has written on Augustine, declared that Bush supporters "are turning out the lights on Enlightenment values, the values on which a tolerant, pluralist nation is based."

Reformed Christians have long advocated bringing faith to bear on politics. Faith and evangelical Christians certainly played a major role in the U.S. elections, though not always in ways envisioned by neocalvinists. So the various ways that Christian faith was a factor in these elections demand study and

See Elections *on page 2...*

Seeking water in Sudan

Drilling for water for refugee camps in Darfur

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On one of his first days in Sudan, as he waited for his supplies and tools to arrive, Lambert Hunse visited a UNICEF sponsored school – housed in large tents – in a refugee camp near El Geneina, in West Darfur about 30 kilometres from the Chad border. Whenever Hunse visits a foreign country, he tries to visit the schools because they are an indicator of a community's well-being.

Students sat on the ground working in exercise books. "All the kids stood up when my driver and I entered, and started singing happy songs," said Hunse. He smiles as he recalls the warm welcome he received. "In the next classroom it was the same. When the principal came to investigate the cause of the commotion, we told him that we admired his efforts in teaching the kids."

Hunse shared with the children his hope that good would overcome evil in the present conflict.

Later, when he talked with the teachers, they told him how they had been driven out of their villages by the rebels, who pursued the intellectuals because they despised educated people. Teachers from Sanidadi described how their school was destroyed, the roof torn off, and the windows smashed. The rebels sent the teachers away – naked, after taking all their clothes – and they haven't dared to return to their villages.

About the refugee camp, Hunse says, "It's a sad sight. I was reduced to tears by seeing people living in something as small as a dog house. All they have is a little bench, a little pot to cook in, and some charcoal. They get a little bit of oil, some wheat, and a corn and soya flour mixture."

In response to what he saw, Hunse says the international community needs to be still more indignant of the poverty problem the world over – especially when it is man-made because of wars.

"Everyone has a story to tell and they all boil down to the same thing," says Lambert Hunse when describing the plight of the people he met in Sudan during his eight weeks there from late August till October. "People were forced out of their homes in the middle of night and their villages burned down. They didn't even have a stick to defend themselves with because there isn't any bush. They fled to the next villages, creating large concentrations of people. They didn't have much before and now they even have less."

Lambert Hunse with the children in Azirni

He saw many people with gunshot wounds that hadn't received medical attention.

Because of his expertise in drilling wells in Nigeria, which he has done for a few months almost every year since 1978, and his involvement with the Wells of Hope project in Nicaragua, Hunse, 72, a member of Covenant Christian

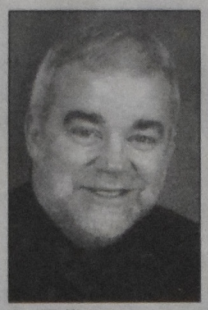
See Sudan *on page 3...*

News

Elections ... *continued from p. 1*

reflection. It is not something that can be undertaken here, but we can glance at a few themes.

Certainly one of the themes picked up by almost all the post-election analysts was that of division. Part of the reason, no doubt, was that the country was divided almost 50-50. When the country was divided less evenly with a Democrat majority, there was little talk of division.



Jim Wallis

Rick Warren

But the very purpose of an election campaign is to accentuate differences and thus force people to choose between two visions of what is good for the country. So an election always brings division. Why is this one seen as more divisive than others?

The prominent role played by religion certainly contributed to deepening the sense of division, as can be seen from the quotes above. When both major parties campaign from a broad center and the issues remain on the level of political strategy and public policy, the campaign comes off as less polarizing, less passionate. Bringing the ultimate, religious commitments on which those policies are (perhaps) based into the fray strikes most liberals as nasty, less civilized, more bruising and injurious to the common good. A great many of the liberal commentators see it as a regression to more primitive, less enlightened times.

Is this all just liberal bias, the result of a worldview that assumes it is politically incorrect to bring one's personal faith and sectarian God-talk into the public square? Or is there some truth to the assertion that bringing religion into the political arena, so that the fight is about ultimates, drastically alters the tenor of politics? In other words, does bringing religion into the political arena make them nastier, more bitter because more is seen to be at stake?

Richard Gwyn of the *Toronto Star* had a very different perspective on the U.S. election campaign, calling it "one of the best *because* it has been one of the most passionate.... It was about convictions – personal convictions, not interest groups."

(Incidentally, the highest voter turnout in decades almost matched one of the lowest voter turnouts in this country. So perhaps Canadians are not as phlegmatic about politics as they are reputed to be.)

Even though neither candidate can be said to have the personal charisma of a Jack Kennedy or a Trudeau, people on both side became impassioned in this campaign, so people came out because the issues mattered to them. If sparking people to care enough to vote is good for democracy, perhaps it is necessary to appeal not just to secondary values, that is, economic and political ones, but to fundamental, religious values.

However, then more is at stake than balancing the budget and getting a little more of this and a little less of that – then politics becomes about ultimates, about Truth and Justice. And then isn't it inevitable that the opposition becomes the enemy – those who stand for the Lie and Oppression, Moral Decadence and Exploitation? Doesn't religious politics mean polarization and the end of civil discourse? Is this what we see happening in the U.S.?

The prevailing story is that George Bush got elected because his campaign manager Carl Rove implemented a strategy of working through the churches. This turned out an army of enthusiastic evangelicals, many of whom had avoided politics till now, who by dint of organization and hard work tipped the election in Bush's favor. This interpretation of the election is disputed, but there is no doubt that white evangelicals voted overwhelmingly for Bush. According to one poll that I saw, about 86 percent of evangelicals who attend church at least once a week voted Republican. The big story was the huge number of people who cited "moral values" as the issue that decided their vote this election.

Not just liberal pundits but also those on the right bought this account of what happened at the polls. Richard Land, a prominent leader among Southern Baptists, the largest and most organized contingent of evangelicals, couldn't suppress a gloating note in his post-election commentary. He sees as the underlying story – missed by the mainstream press – the "culture war" going on across America. Families across the country expressed their concern in this election about where the nation is headed with its "anything goes" attitude. He believes that not just evangelicals – there aren't enough of them to elect a president – but Americans across the board have awakened to the fact that the cultural envelope has been pushed too far in the direction of permissiveness. So on Nov. 2 they voted values – traditional values.

Armstrong Williams, a black conservative, said the election was about "restoring the tenets of faith and morality in American culture." Americans see their country as losing its moral basis, sliding into decadence, and Bush is seen as someone who, like themselves, is affirming the existence of "an absolute point of reference with which to discern right from wrong."

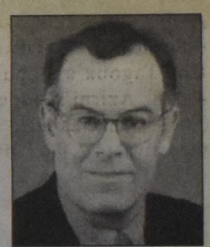
Another conservative commentator, Linda Chavez, suggested that the voters turned against the liberal media and intellectual elite, who don't understand American voters "because they're at Starbucks sipping their latte's Sunday morning instead of in church."

Yes, chimed in Marv Olasky, the editor of the Christian magazine *World*, Bush won because moral issues were more important to Americans than Iraq or the economy. He suggested that voters had an eye on appointments to the Supreme Court (an issue Olasky stressed during the campaign) and that they were tired of activist judges, an elite who is busy undermining the basis of the American way of life.

But Andrew Kohut of the PEW Research Center warned that the exit polls citing the importance of "moral values" as the watershed issue in this election may be misleading. If asked whether moral values played an important role in deciding who to vote for, who wouldn't say yes?

MacNeil-Lehrer (PBS) interviewed Rick Warren (*Purpose-driven Life*) and Jim Wallis (*Sojourners*) on the role that moral values and religion played in the election. Both posed the question is, Which values? Jim Wallis, who had traveled the country to address the issue of poverty in America, asked, Can we shrink Christian values down to one or two issues like abortion and gay marriage? Aren't poverty and war religious issues as well? It isn't as if one group of voters have all the moral values on their side.

Warren spoke of a "cultural shift" that has been happening in America for a number of years already, and it isn't just evangelicals but Catholics and mainline Christians who have been moving to the right. He agreed with Wallis that the range of moral values espoused in the Bible is much broader. Historically, among Christians liberals have championed social values – justice issues – and evangelicals personal morality and family values. Moreover, he pointed out, evangelicals did not choose marriage and abortion as issues; they were merely reacting to those from the left who are attacking those values.



David Brooks

David Brooks, a conservative columnist for the *New York Times*, argued that the U.S. electorate isn't nearly as polarized as the pundits are making out. Most share a set of core values. Even on abortion, a recent poll showed, people aren't nearly as far apart as those on the extremes. Mark Shields, who is paired with him on MacNeil-Lehrer, agreed: most of the country is "pro-choice but anti-abortion." Pointing out that this time around there wasn't a higher percentage of pro-life voters than in the previous election, Brooks concluded that Bush didn't just appeal to the Bible belt; he had appeal across the country. Politically, more Americans are becoming Republican, he suggested, and people voted for Bush because they feel more comfortable with him: he shares their values and he is more like them.

Politics and God-talk

Was the prominence given to faith and religion in this election entirely a good thing?

When the faith or religion of candidates come into the foreground, there is always the danger of hypocrisy. It is impossible to judge the heart of candidates, so if being religious will get you votes, candidates will make an effort to *seem* religious.

We saw this on the Democratic side. Democrats were talking about the God-gap and that Kerry had to engage in more God-talk like George Bush to appeal to voters. Christians from the mainline churches, who have always championed peace and justice issues as faith values, and black churches, concerned about poverty and jobs, also urged the Democrats to recover this part of their heritage. They complained that the party had become too secular. But then the danger arises that religion is simply exploited in order to garner votes.

Even among Christians there are different attitudes toward the use of explicitly religious language in the public square. Gary Hart, for example, a Democrat known for reflecting on issues in the light of his Christian faith, says he avoids putting his beliefs in the center of his appeal for support. In a pluralistic society, he says, declarations of faith should not become a condition for office.

Writing in the week prior to the elections, Stanley Carlson-Thies, an advocate for faith-based organizations and a member of the Center for Public Justice (led by Jim Skillen), lamented the role religion played in this campaign. Although Bush made many allusions to his personal faith, "he has done little to articulate how those religious beliefs are connected with the goals and limits, the hopes and concerns of his policies."

"It is perfectly reasonable, and right," affirms Carlson-Thies, "for a presidential candidate not to try to turn every one of his church's positions into binding law – yet we rightly then should hear how such tolerance is related to those religious convictions, rather than merely being given the compartmentalization of religious convictions...."

News

Sudan ... *continued from page 1*

Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario, was approached by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) to drill wells or to repair damaged water infrastructures in Sudan. With six suitcases filled with tools and supplies – many provided by local businesses – he traveled to El Geneina in the West Darfur Region near the Chad border. There he implemented the first phase of the water restoration project.

CRWRC is partnering in Sudan with five other North American humanitarian aid organizations – World Relief, World Concern, North West Medical Teams International, Food for the Hungry, and MAP International – in a coalition called Darfur Relief Collaboration.

Near El Geneina, three villages without the support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been assessed and identified as needing immediate help. The populations of Um Tagouk, Azirni, and Sanidadi have burgeoned since early 2003 with the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the conflict between rebel groups and government forces supported by local Arab militias. For example, an estimated 14,376 IDPs had joined Um Tagouk's population of 4,878. Azirni's population of 3,063 had increased to 5,469 with the arrival of 2,406 IDPs. Though villagers had temporarily been able to handle the burden, without the support of NGOs their resources would soon be depleted. The region's rainy season gave some relief from the water crisis – with the collection of water in wadis, temporary river beds – but they were expected to dry out by November.

When Hunse received his supplies, he toured Um Tagouk, Sanidadi, and Azirni to assess the water-related needs of each village. He faced many obstacles: dealing with language barriers, working in 40 degrees Celsius weather with no shade, traveling over poor roads, waiting for transportation, encountering inevitable politics between aid organizations, and dealing with the damaged water infrastructure.

"When the project started, we thought we would dig new wells, but that's not how it went," he says. "So much was destroyed by war and plain neglect."

Hunse points out that the people in the three villages owned hundreds of donkeys, which benefited them immensely when they had to travel long distances to get water. Children as young as three or four years of age rode the donkeys to the wells, either hauling the water in huge bags or twenty litre pails.

He chuckles when he recalls a scene he witnessed where a young child tried to steer a stubborn donkey through a puddle. The donkey refused to budge. But somehow – with much prodding and poking – the child persuaded the donkey to carry on.

Though not everyone owns a donkey, the people share the animals, which are able to make two trips daily. "They are brothers and sisters in their suffering," Hunse comments.

Supplies in Um Tagoun

One NGO offers an animal health program which, among other things, de-worms the donkeys so that they can continue to do their essential and important work.

In Um Tagouk Hunse repaired damaged pumps. Two large wells also received attention. One had dried out, but the other was polluted.

"The people had been dipping their buckets into the well water while their donkeys were right next to it, fouling the water. We made a drain ditch running away from it so that everything would dry up. We pumped the well empty. That took two to three days to finish. And then we had beautiful, clean water!" he says enthusiastically.

In Sanidadi, where the teachers had been forcefully removed, Hunse discovered that the generator that powered the pump had been damaged by extreme flooding. Even though it was repaired, it still only worked part of the time because the borehole didn't produce water as it had in the past. For now, equipment has been moved to higher ground and the place has been slated for a new borehole.

Of his experience in the village of Azirni, where the reconstruction process took almost three weeks, he relates, "When the water finally came streaming out – we had worked long and hard on that one – it was an emotional experience. The kids were filling all these containers with water! I said to everyone there, 'Now we will pray to God to thank him.' They all said something about how God has been good to us."

Hunse notes that right after the water was restored in the village, the school was reopened.

According to Hunse, an assessment of the program's progress over an eight week period revealed that 87% of the goal for water retrieval had been attained.

"We met a lot of obstacles," he says. "But we also accomplished a lot."

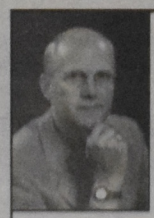
In the near future, other NGOs will bring drilling rigs into the region to begin drilling new wells.

Hunse and other aid workers were told not to proselytize in this Muslim country, but if anyone asked them why they had come to Sudan to help the people they were free to express why.

"People know that we aren't Muslims, but they weren't antagonistic toward us. They were relieved to see us and showed real warmth. I couldn't tell the people to read the Bible. But in our deeds we were handing out a cup of cold water as Christ has told us to do.

"The Sudanese are religious people. One man asked me, 'How do we fight the satanic evil in the country? How do we get rid of it?' Hope is the key word. We wanted to instill in the people the hope for a better tomorrow. Our hope is portrayed by our deeds."

Lambert with children and donkey in Azirni



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Editorial

Baptism: perfect imperfection

Harry der Nederlanden

Last Sunday (Nov.7) the worship service in our church was billed as a service of lament. The sermon, a dialogue between father and son (between Jamie Vander Berg, our director of ministries, and Fred Vander Berg, pastor of Westmount CRC in Strathroy) stressed the importance of embracing incompleteness and imperfection as part of our creatureliness – a creatureliness that God pronounced as good when he made us.

It was also a special occasion: Fred was there to baptize his grandchild, Jamie's newborn daughter. Fred and Jamie pointed to the tiny, helpless infant as an image of incompleteness. After the service I razzed Fred a little after admiring the baby, sleeping contentedly in Grandma's arms: "How dare you say that baby isn't perfect? Look at her: she's making a liar out of you!"

But, of course, Fred was right. It was a favorite theme of Reformed theologian Cornelius van Til. What's wrong with us – with humanity – is not that we are finite, limited, earthly creatures, he said. That's how God made us. What's wrong with us is that we don't accept our creaturely dependence on our Heavenly Father. We reject his authority and authorship, assuming for ourselves the competence to decide on our own what is right and good for us.

In the sermon, Fred referred to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden; it is the sign and seal of the limits of human knowledge and judgment. There are things that only God knows, and in order to know ourselves truly and be content with who we are, we must defer to God. Our minds have their proper habitat within God's.

But, to use an image from Star Trek, faith does not achieve a mind-meld with God. Our knowing, like our life's journey, is always imperfect, still growing, because we remain children – children who have to be shown the way.

But not only is our knowledge partial and incomplete, it is also darkened and deformed by sin. Baptism brings home both aspects of our existence. It brings home our utter dependence on God. And it also brings home the fact that after the Fall we need to die to our impulse to raise ourselves up into the fullness of knowledge and instead to trust ourselves to the mercy shown us in Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life.

As I was preparing this issue of CC, I was forced to think about the U.S. elections (front page story) and about the history of Reformed Christianity in Canada as I wrote a review of Tymen Hofman's book. The meaning of baptism, it dawned on me, does not extend to just the personal and familial. It also has geo-political meaning. It is not just about this one baby being born again; it is also about the birth of nations in violence, about politics, about dreams of freedom, about national aspirations, about the movement of peoples across borders, about war and genocide, about our attempts to create a civilization in which our children can live in peace and freedom.

Do you think that's stretching it? Remember that baptism doesn't just draw on the imagery of washing. It recalls the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army and also the crossing of the Jordan River into the promised land. Those are archetypal geo-political events. They happened not just to Israel, but they happened again and again throughout history in every part of the world.

Just as Israel invaded Canaan, so it was in turn invaded by the great civilizations of Babylon and Assyria. At the time of Christ's birth the entire Mediterranean world had been conquered by Rome, but by the time of Augustine that great empire was already crumbling under the onslaught of Germanic tribes from the north. Islam spread northward from Arabia and eventually overran what was once the center of Christendom and even threatened Europe. Europeans spread out all around the globe, settling in the Americas and displacing most of the natives there.

When I was a schoolboy, much of this history was told as the advance of civilization – a story of exploration and discovery, of extending the boundaries of knowledge, of heroic exploits, of settling the frontiers and bringing enlightenment to people formerly living in darkness. Nowadays the same story is told in terms of racism, theft of land, subjugation and conquest, bloody wars, extermination and even genocide. History is a mixture of both brutality and idealism, of heroism and villainy, often conjoined in the same person and in the same event.

History brings forth Hitler and Stalin and a host of lesser tyrants, but also mothers and fathers who lovingly nurture their children and bring them up in the fear of the Lord. When we bring children into the world and present them to the community, we are introducing them into this violent history so that in their turn they can take its tasks upon themselves. Yet, in this broken world there are still noble tasks worth doing, tasks which bring hope and light into the darkness.

Even our noblest deeds, however, are tainted. Sometimes they turn out very differently from what we intend or expect. Take the work of those young men and women, for example, who answered the call of their church and their government to help save native children from poverty. It was seen as a ministry not long ago. Now some refer to it as cultural genocide.

No, there aren't very many sure things in a broken world with imperfect institutions and finite human beings who can see only a very short distance ahead of them. Many committed Christians in the U.S., urged by their pastors and leaders not to leave the public square to the secularists, worked hard to help get George Bush re-elected. He is, I'm convinced, a pious man who has devoted himself to a noble calling. Rightly or wrongly, he is sending young men and women far, far away from home to kill other people in an attempt to put an end to terrorism. He has been persuaded that he can bring democracy into the heart of the Muslim world and thereby bring greater prosperity and hope so we can live together in peace. The intentions, though not wholly altruistic, do have an idealistic side. But most people see them as misguided, as doing more harm than good.

It would be nice if we could know the long-term consequences of our plans and actions, but we can't. That's why we need guiding principles.

In the second last chapter of Ty Hofman's history of the CRC in Canada, Louis Tamminga looks back over several decades of Christian activism. A waste of precious time, Tamminga concludes. His involvement in Christian social action, he says, became a detriment to his spiritual life.

I must confess that his gloomy judgment cast a shadow over my mind for several days after I read it. I grew up under the preaching and teaching of Rev. Tamminga. He advised my father to buy me Van Riessen's *Society of the Future* when I was in high school, and it captured my imagination. But I take Tamminga at his word. It is possible to become involved in Christian enterprises in ways that are not edifying.

Nevertheless, just because the attempt to create a Christian political party was not successful doesn't mean it wasn't worth trying, and just because confessional parties have come to nought in The Netherlands doesn't erase Kuyper's great vision. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have also disappeared. Does that imply a judgment on the faithful efforts of our grandparents and great-grandparents?

The Reformation, too, was not without huge admixtures of personality and pride – the human element that Tamminga laments in Christian political action; yet, we go on celebrating Reformation Day.

One of the things that marred, but which also lent great elan, to the various organizations launched on Kuyperian foundations was the commitment to purely biblical principles unadulterated by non-biblical elements. But participatory citizenship and party-formation emerged within the political order known as democracy. And the roots of democracy are by no means exclusively Christian. We are limited, imperfect creatures working in a broken world with tools that are far from sharp and pure.

There's nothing shameful in that. And we cannot expect even the most idealistic efforts to be blessed with success just because we invested so much effort and hope in them. All we can do is act according to our own best insights led by Scripture. Some will labor faithfully and mightily without seeing any fruits to their labors; yet, those labors bear fruit after they have joined the saints in heaven. Others will see their efforts blossom and hear themselves lauded for their achievements, but after they die their work will turn out have been a dead-end or spoiled by unintended consequences.

Baptized in Christ, our lives and our works stand under the cross of Christ. We relinquish them unto him, to judge them and to redeem them as he sees fit. All we are called to do is to be obedient according to our best scripturally kindled lights. God has promised to bless that – perhaps not in this life or in this dispensation, but he did not say I will bless it only if it is cleverly done and successful. Even we neocalvinist fools might yet earn from the master a "Well done, you good and faithful servant."

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Letters

The Crusades: myth and reality

I read with interest "What the Crusades were really like: dispelling some myths," in the October 25 issue of *Christian Courier*. It is always laudable to dispel historical myths in the name of historical truths, but I am left with the impression that Thomas Madden may be guilty of trying to create some historical myths of his own.

What he contends, in essence, is that the Crusaders were motivated solely by the desire to free the Holy Land from Muslim control and that less exalted motives, such as the desire for land, were totally foreign to them. However, when we look at sources contemporary with the Crusades, they hardly support Madden's interpretation of what motivated the Crusaders, which is not to say that the wish to restore Christian rule in the Holy Land was not one of their objectives.

In his history of the First Crusade, Robert the Monk includes the text of the sermon — albeit a reconstructed one — preached by Pope Urban II at Clermont, in Auvergne, in 1095 that launched the first of the nine crusades. In it the Pope reputedly urged his audience, many of them knights, as follows: "Let no possessions keep you back, no solicitude for your property. Your land is shut in all sides by the sea and mountains, and is too thickly populated. There is not much wealth here, and the soil scarcely yields enough to support you. On this account you kill and devour each other, and carry on war and mutually destroy each other. Let your hatred and quarrels cease, your civil wars come to an end, and all your dissensions stop. Set out on the road to the holy sepulchre, take the land from that wicked people, and make it your own. That land, which as the Scripture says, is flowing with milk and honey, God gave to the children of Israel. Jerusalem is the best of all lands; more fruitful than others, as it were a second Paradise of delights. This land our Savior made illustrious by his birth, beautiful with his life, and sacred with his suffering; He redeemed it with his death and glorified it with his tomb." (Alfred J. Andrea, ed., The Medieval Record)

This excerpt also calls into question Madden's assertion that the Crusades must not be seen as a "safety valve," one that removed many belligerent noblemen, who were battling one another for land and were generally causing a great deal of turmoil and hardship, from France in particular. The church had been attempting for generations to rein in the rapaciousness of the nobility, especially in France, by means of such programs as "The Peace of God" and "The Truce of God." However, these had failed miserably, and it was hoped that a Crusade to the Holy Land by large numbers of nobles, many of whom were expected to remain there should the Crusade be a success, would help restore order, peace, and tranquility to the French countryside.

Another major contention made by Madden is that Europeans did not benefit economically from the Crusades. Again, the evidence points overwhelmingly in the other direction. If Crusaders did not benefit economically, then Italian merchants did, and they did so enormously. Through their involvement in the Crusades, Italian merchants helped to reopen trade routes between the Near, and Far, East and Europe that had been cut centuries earlier: at the time of the Islamic expansion in the 7th and 8th centuries. This trade generated immense wealth in northern Italy in particular and made possible, economically speaking, the Renaissance that first began in Italy around 1350.

Considering the developments in the Islamic world in recent decades, and the Islamic view of the Crusades in particular, it is perhaps not surprising that there is the temptation to present the Crusades in as positive a light as possible: positive from the perspective of Christians, at least. It is an interpretation of the Crusades that likewise tries to counter the frequently less than positive picture of the Crusades offered by secular historians in the West.

All of which is not to say that the loss of Palestine, Syria and Egypt, the historical heartland of Christianity, to the forces of Islam in the 7th century was not a misfortune, a loss for which one can also come up with a number of religious/ecclesiastical and secular explanations. The later conquest of Asia Minor and Constantinople (Istanbul) by the Islamic world only compounded the loss, leading a prominent Dutch historian to lament recently that the Byzantine Empire, which was comprised of all the territories just mentioned, had existed in vain.

That, in my view, is to overstate the case, but the loss of these territories to the Islamic world was a major misfortune from a Christian, and broader Western, perspective, but it is one that the Islamic world does not appear to take very much into consideration.

When it comes to relations between the Christian, and larger Western, and Islamic worlds, the Islamic world tends to take the Crusades as its starting point, rather than its conquest of the Christian heartland in the 7th century. Had those conquests not taken place, there would have been no Crusades.

Gerry Gerrits
Associate Professor of History
Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S.

The day after the US election, just when I felt low contemplating another four years of escalating world tensions, I was picked-up reading Jim Joose's discerning analysis of the so-called Bush Doctrine (*C.C.* Oct. 11, p.5).

There are voices that can help us escape the downward spiral of militarism. Joose's is such a voice.

Thank you for writing.

Nick Loenen
Richmond, BC

Response to Harry Antonides

I have read the response that Mr. Antonides wrote in your October 25th edition. I guess we should resist the urge to have the last word, but forgive me if I make one further comment.

Though Mr. Antonides' piece is entitled "Response to Mr. James Joosse," it addresses few if any of the issues I raised. My point was that this new direction of U.S. hawkish foreign policy, called the Bush Doctrine with its elements of unilateralism, preemption, and regime change, sets the world on a dangerous course of violence and mayhem. Mr. Antonides doesn't really address any of this, but merely assumes the "doctrine's" legitimacy. He has bought the Podhoretz/ Bush doctrine. The entirety of his piece is evidence of this wholesale and uncritical acceptance.

He simply states that the U.S. is good, and the violence that it inflicts is good, and the other side is evil and the violence that they engage in is bad. He does not see that the occupation of Iraq is the very demonstration of the doctrine in its frightening application. He ignores the facts that the war in Iraq was prosecuted under false pretenses; that a nation was laid waste in furtherance of a perverse political and ideological agenda; that the doctrine denies any notion that the U.S. has to answer to anyone for its actions; and that the occupation has in fact escalated rather than diminished the cycle of violence.

The approbation of this kind of hegemony by a military superpower is an abdication of our responsibility to call the powerful of the world to account; a responsibility which is all the more important in the case at hand, the U.S. having spurned the counsel of the vast majority of nations.

Though Mr. Antonides does not question the Bush doctrine, he does say some interesting things. He criticizes me for my silence about the atrocities being perpetrated in the streets of Iraq against the occupation forces and others who are involved in what is being called the reconstruction of Iraq. In his letter Mr. Antonides states in reference to the four men who were killed in Fallujah: "These Americans were murdered because they come to rebuild Iraq's badly damaged infrastructure." In like manner, he makes reference to Mr. Kenneth Bigley's murder by stating, "The 'crime' of this British engineer was that he too had come to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq."

These statements are good examples of the world being turned on its head, or spin. A better explanation for these atrocities might be that the foreign nationals are resented and killed, not for their reconstruction work (an unlikely proposition at best), but rather because they or their governments were responsible for the devastation in the first place, through a ten-year regime of punitive sanctions followed by an aggressive bombing campaign and military occupation. Occupation forces and their civilian cohorts are rarely welcomed by the societies they invade, as Mr. Antonides himself might surely know.

Mr. Antonides asks me to suggest a response to the violence perpetrated by those whom we find to be our opponents. Though this goes beyond the scope of my initial letter, and well beyond my small allotment of wisdom, let me just say this; I have an intuition, to which our present predicament in Iraq might attest, that the tired old military and militant solutions are a sham, and must be resisted and exposed for what they are.

Violence only breeds violence. No real or lasting peace can come of it. I cannot subscribe to an eschatology that has the last of God's human creatures killing each other, each out of his self declared righteousness. We must all strive to put aside our swords. Someone has to have the courage to be the first to do this. Might this not be our calling?

James Joosse

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Letters

That, too, is kingdom

This year Oct. 31 fell on a Sunday. What text did our preacher choose for Reformation Day? Matthew 9:35-38. It is one of the three texts in Matthew, where the gospel of Jesus Christ is identified as "the gospel of the *Kingdom*" (NIV, "the good news of the kingdom"). The other two are Matthew 4:23 and 24:14). In their context these are important texts about the ministry of Jesus.

But when you read them you may wonder why the kingdom is mentioned at all. They are all about Jesus proclaiming the gospel everywhere he went. And what else? Healing. Healing the sick, epileptics and paralytics, and healing the demon-possessed. What drove Jesus in his preaching? He had compassion for those who were "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36).

You do not need to choose between kingdom and compassion. Compassion is central to the gospel; and *that, too, is kingdom*!

The question is being discussed among us whether the immigrants who came to Canada after WWII – those neo-Kuyperians – were blest with good results in their kingdom promotions. Is Prof. A. Leder right when he sees only vestiges remaining of the early drive to establish Christian organizations? Less somber on this score – and more sober – is Rev. Tymen Hofman's assessment, that we in Canada have been very fruitful in founding Christian schools everywhere. (They indeed exist and flourish at every level, right through post-graduate school.) And the CLAC in Canada is rightly mentioned as a blessed fruit of the kingdom offensive; but ... the movement has been less far-reaching in the area of politics.

Fair enough. Those of us (old warriors like myself) who regret the dormancy which is creeping into the neo-Kuyperian movement need not be wholly discouraged. For as the attention turned away from these earlier fronts, our community began to turn to other areas which needed development. I'm thinking of the enormous strides we took in the areas of mercy, representing the compassion of king Jesus (Mth 9:36).

World Relief for the Lord. *That, too, is kingdom* !

And we became more aware of the needs of the mentally, emotionally and relationally troubled and other more "helpless" sheep without shepherds. Christian counseling organizations are providing an important service now in many parts of Canada. And think of the *Friendship* program, which for the first time, reached out to those who were largely ignored before. And lately we have given needed attention to the abused.

People, I want to shout: *that, too, is kingdom* !

When I was still in grade school, I think, an event took place in our part of Rotterdam which my grandfather was prominently involved in. Abraham Kuyper, deeply disturbed by the fact that the fiery socialists of his day claimed to be the only people with compassion for the needy, established *Patrimonium*. This organization built low-rent homes for working people. My grandfather's name is probably still visible on that lovely housing unit that was built. The Kingdom is a kingdom of compassion.

Our early years here as churches were largely occupied with seeking to build true fellowship among the diverse members of our churches, diverse even though all came from the same small country in Europe. Only a few were reaching out to others (some wonderfully well). Now outreach gets more attention among us. As the Matthew texts quoted above show: the first task of the church is proclaiming the gospel, calling people everywhere to the Lord, at home and abroad. Do we still appreciate the worldwide work of the Back to God Hour and World Missions? Now the Lord is using us to plant new churches everywhere which usually gather more new converts than the established churches. And the *Alpha* program?

What a fine medium! *That, too, is kingdom*!

May I (old worship war warrior) say a word about changes in the liturgy of the church? I regret that Ty Hofman described contemporary music as "rock and roll." I am not an expert, but I think that any expert would tell you that the contemporary music we sing in church is not rock and roll. That is a put-down, a scoffer's remark, dear friend. Where, then, does the contemporary music come from? Has your church ever been visited by a choir from a mission field? Well, I believe that the influence of converts from other nations have influenced this new style more than the world. And what a joyful noise!

And, don't you agree with me: *that, too, is kingdom*!

* * *

And yet: there is another side to all this, too. Let me just say it straight out: we may not become so absorbed in works of mercy and evangelism and liturgical experiment that we begin to ignore, or even, reject some of the earlier kingdom enterprises which we started in Canada.

If, in politics, we just let the CPJ plod on, without our support, without broader and concerted efforts to change the political landscape in Canada, we are missing one important aspect of our calling here! We cannot leave that building in ugly scaffolding.

I have been active in a political party in Canada for about a decade. Seldom do I meet Reformed friends at any meeting. I have written before that I consider the congregational prayers we hear an important indicator of our concerns. They usually reduce our kingdom-prayers to sickness to be healed, personal or relational troubles. We do not pray enough about where our society is ailing more seriously. Our nation itself and the nations of the world are struggling with many evils: crime, violence, racism, corruption, poverty, slavery, terrorism.

And there is some truth to what Dr. Charles Stanley on Oct. 31 called "a systemic movement to eliminate God from public life." Where is the storm of prayer about that? In practice, we are abandoning our world to the gods of the age. We *withdraw* inside the church. So, yes, we strive in many newer kingdom fields, but let us not forget the old.

For, people, *that, too, is still kingdom*.

One serious putdown of our pioneers is that they were "triumphalistic." By and large, I think, that is a serious misreading of these fine leaders. They were not triumphalistic. They knew what they were up against and would not give in or give up. Why not? Because they had strong convictions.

They felt deeply that what they were doing *had* to be done for the new country they already loved. They were not (I knew them intimately) like the exiles who were waiting to return to some Jerusalem somewhere on earth. They had come to stay, and they took very seriously the call of the prophet Jeremiah (29:4-9) to the exiles, "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Serving the Lord in Canada, they were only seeking his heavenly kingdom, seeking to have it manifested more fully on earth. Let us not abandon them now.

Yes, what they were doing *that, too, is still for the gospel of the kingdom*!

William L. Vander Beek
Langley, B.C.

The dawning of a new era for the church and justice

Advent is the time of waiting and preparation for the expected coming of the Christ who brings hope, righteousness (justice) and salvation to a broken world. This is also a time when the Christian Reformed Church awaits the Restorative Justice Study mandated by Synod 2003. The report of this multi-racial, bi-national and multi-skilled committee illustrates the criminal justice crisis, outlines restorative justice responses, drafts a biblical study of justice, and concludes by supporting restorative justice principles and submitting recommendations for church and member implementation. (look for the full report here: http://www.crcna.org/whatweoffer/resources/synodical/index.asp?WhatWeOfferMenu.)

The time of waiting for official Synodical endorsement of the Restorative Justice report will soon be over. The report's birthing process began in the opening days of the third millennium, in February 2000, when 35 CRC members from the US and Canada, involved or interested in their respective criminal justice systems, met for a Criminal Justice Consultation in Grand Rapids. After two days of study and dialogue between the participating judges, lawyers, prison wardens, theologians, chaplains, police and youth workers, it was concluded the criminal justice systems in Canada and the United States are 'broken' and the church must respond. It was a wake-up call followed by the Restorative Justice overture from Classis BC Northwest to Synod 2003. Synod responded favorably. Synod mandated a Restorative Justice (RJ) Study Committee to dig deeper into the Bible and to study the situation in both Canada and the United States.

The just-released report challenges the church and members to address justice issues as part of the church's prophetic witness and biblical voice. While alternatives to prison need to be explored, the report goes much further – with implications that change the way that members and churches respond to conflicts and law violations that take place in the home, school, church, neighboring communities and the state. Restorative justice responses focus less on court process and more on the needs of the victims and offenders, less on 'punishment' per se and more on offender accountability, less on the isolated individual and more on the effected community, less on prison isolation and more on laying the groundwork to make reconciliation a possibility, less on faceless justice and more on justice that involves the victim, the offender and the affected community.

While churches and members await Synodical acceptance of the Restorative Justice Study Report, all are challenged to read, study and respond to the report as fits their understanding and situation. Churches that have members working in the criminal justice system can take advantage of these resources for study, dialogue, and beginning restorative responses where justice is broken. Congregational social justice committees can be empowered by study of the report and implementation of recommendations as appropriate to their situation. The third week in November (15-21) is Restorative Justice Week. This provides an opportunity to highlight restorative justice in sermons, church liturgy, or church programs. Restorative justice ministry beginnings will offer families, schools, churches and communities glimpses of biblical shalom.

As CRC criminal justice workers and other church members study, dialogue, debate, critique, and implement restorative justice initiatives before Synod 2005, the sooner the CRC will begin to experience the dawning of a new era for church and justice.

Restorative justice awareness and alternative actions equip the church and members with tools to heal the 'broken' criminal justice system and to confess Christ in a world of violence.

Rev. John de Vries Jr.

Why I am a six-day evolutionist

Jon Dykstra

We all know that fish are a good source of protein, but did you know that some are a good source of evolutionary information? It's true – I know that evolution is an indisputable fact and it's all because a little fish told me. The Astyanax mexicanus tells us so much about evolution because it has actually evolved: the regular surface dwelling version of this species can see with the best of them, but it has a cave dwelling cousin that has adapted to its lightless surroundings by losing its eyes. As a result the two versions of this fish look quite distinct but they can be interbred, showing that they are indeed the same species, distinguished only by the blind cave fish's evolutionary adaptation.

The evolution of blind fish

The history of this fish is easy to imagine. At one point some sighted fish made their way into dark caves where they were subsequently trapped. These caves had no light so their eyes served no useful purpose to them. Not only were their eyes useless, having eyes in this environment was actually harmful in one critical way: eyes are softer than the rest of a fish, so as these fish bumped around in the dark their eyes were susceptible to gouging and cuts from the sharp protrusions on the cavern walls. So imagine for the moment that a fish without eyes is born into this environment. No eyes means it has no soft flesh to get gouged. This eyeless fish is therefore hardier and fitter than its sighted siblings. That makes it more likely that this blind fish will reproduce and pass on its blindness to the next generation. Over a number of generations this blind fish and its offspring must have competed with the sighted fish until only the blind fish – the fitter fish – remained. This is a clear example of survival of the fittest, of Evolution in action, and it is so convincing I can't deny it. That is why I am an evolutionist.

Evolution's two meanings

But while I may be an evolutionist, I don't deny that God created the world in six literal days – I'm an evolutionist, but I'm also a creationist. If that is at all surprising to you, let me assure you I was rather shocked myself when I first came to this realization. I had been raised a creationist and for a very long time I thought that meant I had to reject Evolution in any and all forms. But it turns out that the word "Evolution" can mean a number of different things, and some of those meanings do not conflict with creationism. There are two very common meanings to the word:

1) Evolution is often used to describe the small changes that animal species may undergo over time. Perhaps a species of bird might on average start having larger beaks – scientists would readily call this Evolution. This particular use of the word is sometimes referred to as Microevolution or the Special Theory of Evolution. Animal species are adaptable (just think of how dogs have adapted in a variety of ways to meet different needs) so this use of the word isn't particularly controversial.

2) The second use of the word is where the battle actually commences. "Evolution" can be used as a descriptor for the theory that says man evolved from a single cell, which in turn emerged from the primordial soup eons ago. This molecule-to-man hypothesis is also called the General Theory of Evolution, or sometimes Macroevolution and it directly conflicts with the six-day creation account in Genesis 1 and 2.

Equivocation

The reason this all matters is because evolutionists often use examples of microevolution to try and prove macroevolution. And similarly sometimes amateur creationists waste their time (and their credibility) arguing against microevolution because they think they have to be against all things evolutionary. The Astyanax mexicanus fish is a good example in both cases. Since this fish seems to have adapted to its dark cave environments by losing its eyes, evolutionists think it is compelling proof of their General Theory of Evolution. It is so compelling, in fact, that this blind fish bothers many creationists. But creationists need not worry – the blind fish's beneficial mutation doesn't contradict creationism. We live in a fallen world, and that means children and offspring are often born with handicaps or mutations. An eyeless fish is just another normal outcome of this sinful state. Most often these mutations will be harmful but in some rare circumstances, like the Astyanax mexicanus fish, the mutation may actually be beneficial. But it is important to note here that the loss of eyes is an example of devolution, rather than evolution. This fish has lost an ability it once had – the part of its genetic code responsible for making eyes has been short-circuited. The General Theory of Evolution says that complex life arose from simpler life, but this blind fish is an example of a complex animal becoming simpler and less developed. If this fish proves anything, it is that we live in a fallen world.

Conclusion

In any debate it is vital to first define the terms. This is particularly important in the Creation/Evolution debate since it is by confusing the terms that evolutionists make their most compelling case. They can't point to macroevolution in action so instead they use examples of microevolution. Then they act as if there is no difference between the two, calling both the same thing – Evolution. Therefore creationists have to be careful that when they argue against Evolution they haven't made the mistake of arguing against microevolution. Arguing against microevolution is a losing proposition since we see animals undergoing small changes all around us. Evolution in this sense is an indisputable fact. But Evolution on a larger scale – the whole molecules-to-man hypothesis – seems to fly in the face of not only what the Bible says, but also the degeneration and decay we see going on all around us. To believe that organisms improve and progress and becomes more complex over time requires more faith than I can muster. That is why I am and will remain a simple six-day evolutionist.

Please excuse my cynicism

I am continually frustrated by the stories I see in the media about the rebuilding of the developing world. It has come to a head in Iraq. A western government that liberates a Muslim country by forcing them into western 'civilization', economics and all. Hey, the quicker they become like us the better right? To me it sounds like history repeating.

Five centuries ago Christopher Columbus set out on an amazingly ambitious journey. He was determined to reach Asia, a land rumored to be of unequalled wealth. In today's day and age we know him as the "discoverer" of the Americas. Columbus didn't reach Asia on that journey but he did open the floodgates to 450 years of European colonialism.

European colonialism, spurred by the desire for wealth, searched for new land from which they could extract as many resources as possible. Western civilization and its ideals were spreading whether the rest of the world liked it or not. Non-westerners were seen as traditional and lacking progress. Europeans believed that people who did not possess their civilization were 'barbarians' or 'savages'. David Livingstone, a great missionary to Africa at the time, spoke of "Commerce, Christianity, and civilization marching together across the Dark Continent." (George Bush talked of this in his 'axis of evil' speech.) Western civilization was seen as more mature or a step up the evolutionary ladder from the world they were discovering. Luckily (?) For the savages of these exotic places Europeans brought them religious and economic enlightenment and western civilization. The people of these "far off places" must have been extremely thankful that they were pulled out their misery of traditionalism and barbarism. After all European civilization offered them slavery, disease, and exploitation.

Thankfully, however the western world has learned from its mistakes, right? We allow these countries to develop in a way that they see fit, see them as our equals, created in God's image, don't we? I mean we have learned from our mistakes right?

It was said that by creating institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund we were stabilizing the global economy and giving these formerly colonized states a chance to join the global capitalist economy. For example the WTO lets nothing stand in the way of 'fair' trade – environmental laws, human rights, labor standards or any other policy held in the national interest can be attacked as unfair impediments to fair trade and overruled.

The IMF is kind enough to give loans to countries in need. Although there is that one small catch; the country must make structural adjustment towards western capitalism in order to get the loan. These structural adjustments include privatizing state owned enterprises, reducing the size and cost of government through massive pubic sector layoffs and cutting basic social services and subsidies on basic foodstuffs, and reducing any barriers to trade. This has given the IMF and World Bank, and WTO unprecedented control over the economies of developing countries. If those countries want help, they must do what we say.

This is exactly what is happening in Iraq. Immediately after occupying Iraq the U.S. government attempted to sell off all 200 of Iraq's state owned firms to foreign investors rather then give Iraqis the chance to rebuild themselves. The occupiers gave billions of dollars worth of contracts to western companies. These companies were to rebuild Iraq with imported materials, such as cement, which was previously made by a state owned Iraqi firm. The result was that all the jobs created went to foreigners. Not only did the U.S. lay off a massive number of Iraqi workers from the state-owned companies but they replaced them with foreign workers and multinational corporations. With unemployment as high as 67% among Iraqi's this becomes a source of resentment for the Iraqi people.

Lucky (?) for Iraqi's the U.S. is willing to save them from their backward ways and give them democracy and capitalism. Iraq now has a leader hand picked by the U.S. to be voted in democratically. Whatever form the new government takes in Iraq it will not be able to avoid the country's $120 billion debt. No doubt the IMF is close behind offering loans to help rebuild, with only one small catch, structural adjustment on the IMF's terms.

For some reason that sounds familiar, oh yes, neo-colonialism, that's right. Our latest ideas are no different then the ones we had 500 years ago. It seems obvious to the World Bank, IMF and neo-conservatives everywhere that if you pray to the gods of capitalism and never doubt their powers you will be on your way to salvation. All is fair in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness or so they say.

Has anyone stopped to ask the people of Iraq and the rest of the 'developing' world what they want? Or are they too backward to know what is best for themselves. I wonder what would happen if we offered our help based solely on what's best for the people and not on what's best for our wallets.

Sounds like something Jesus would do.

Jeff Fernhout
Brampton, Ont.

Church

Egyptian teenagers fight forced Muslim identities

Iman (standing) and Olfat Malak Ayet

Barbara G. Baker

CAIRO (Compass) – Two teenage Christian sisters in Egypt have gone to court to contest the forced change of their official religious identity to Islam.

A State Council verdict is due by the end of November on the case of Iman and Olfat Malak Ayet, now 17 and 18 years of age.

Raised as Christians for their entire lives by their Coptic Orthodox mother, the two girls were infants when their now-deceased father converted to Islam.

After leaving his Christian wife, little Olfat and as yet unborn Iman in 1986, Malak Aayad Assad changed his name to Mohammed Abdullah al-Mahdi, married a Muslim wife and fathered three more children. After several years' legal battle, he eventually consented to a formal divorce from his Christian wife.

But the father had never taken custody of his two Christian daughters or interfered with their mother for raising them as Christians. "He sometimes visited us on the Christian feast days," Olfat told Compass during a private interview in July, "but he never suggested to us that we should become Muslims."

It was only in the spring of 2003, when Olfat requested a copy of her birth certificate from government computers, that she learned her father had changed their official identities from Christian to Muslim. The documents had been altered several years before his death in November 2002.

In order to enter their final school examinations and then apply for university acceptance, the Christian sisters must first be issued their national I.D. cards. But if based on their "Muslim" birth certificates, the formal identity cards will declare them Muslims, rather than Christians.

Once a citizen is officially registered as a Muslim, the Egyptian government has historically refused to allow the individual to renounce Islam, which forbids apostasy on penalty of death.

So through a maternal relative, the two minor girls filed a case in May against the Interior Ministry, requesting the right to change their birth certificates back to their original Christian names and religion.

"How can these children be forced to become Muslims, when they have never practiced Islam in their entire lives?" Coptic Christian lawyer Naguib Gabriel asked the court at the third trial hearing on July 6. Gabriel is currently representing Coptic citizens attempting to maintain or restore their Christian identities in 11 similar cases.

Defending the Egyptian government's viewpoint, the Interior Ministry declared in its legal brief that the two girls must wait until age 21 to apply to the courts, if they want to revert to their Christian birth-identities.

At the June 22 hearing in the trial, the Interior Ministry representative insisted that because Islamic law is "the main source of legislation and the Islamic faith is the religion of the state," it followed that Islamic law "should be applied to the other citizens embracing any other heavenly religions – Christianity or Islam – in their personal matters."

The government bureaucrat went on to demand that the Egyptian state use an "iron hand" to stop such religious quibbling over trifles, "in order to protect social peace and the structure of society." In conclusion, he quoted Islamic law injunctions requiring that a male Muslim apostate should be killed if he refuses to repent, and a woman should be "imprisoned and beaten until she dies or embraces Islam."

Since 1998, the Egyptian government has been issuing new barcoded national I.D. cards, which all citizens are required to carry on their persons. The deadline for obtaining the new cards is set for January 2005.

A Coptic human rights activist filed a lawsuit in 1997, attempting to challenge the constitutionality of a 1994 Interior Ministry decree requiring that religious identity be stated on national I.D. cards. But the courts unilaterally withdrew the case documents and never heard the case.

"We are praying all the time to win this verdict," Olfat and Iman told Compass.

Christian and Muslim leaders stem violence in Liberia

NEW YORK (UMNS) - Interfaith leaders helped restore calm after a recent eruption of violence in Liberia, according to humanitarian sources.

After the late October burning of several churches, mosques and schools in the Redlight and Jacob Town areas outside Monrovia, Christian and Muslim religious leaders quickly met, then visited five area radio stations and in broadcasts called for calm and cessation to further violence and burnings. The leaders also met with United Nations Mission in Liberia officials, who then increased security in the affected areas, according to Benjamin Dorme Lartey, head of the Liberian Council of Churches.

The source of the violence, initially reported as possible Muslim-Christian conflicts, has now been attributed to other disputes. "We nonetheless commend the Liberian Council of Churches and the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia for taking the lead in helping end this unrest and averting the development of future conflict between Muslims and Christians," said Moses Ole Sakuda, associate director of the Church World Service."

Children receiving safe drinking water after the violence in Jacob Town

I just don't know what triggered the recent fighting," said Liberian United Methodist Bishop John G. Innis, while in the United States for a Council of Bishops meeting. "Conflict or war is like a disease . . . it comes, but it takes time for healing to take place, so we are of the opinion in Christ that the situation will one day come under control. There will be total peace in our country, but before peace comes, we have to go through some tough times."

The Inter Religious Council of Liberia has opened two bank accounts and has also raised an initial amount of LD85,000.00 to help facilitate the reconstruction of churches and mosques that were burnt or vandalized during the violence in Monrovia and its suburbs. The Religious Council comprises both Muslim and Christian leaders.

Despite the new violence, various church and humanitarian agencies, including the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), continue the demobilization of former soldiers without interruption. Camps near the city – established in March with a grant from the United Nations Development Program – provide supervised activities leading to the reintegration of some 23,000 combatants who fought in the 14-year civil war.

Demobilization is critical in stabilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants who, through Liberia's years of turmoil, may have known little outside of life as members of a violent fighting force. The term "ex-combatant" refers to former soldiers as well as to cooks, porters, and others who accompanied them, often by force, during the civil crisis in Liberia.

Camp activities are geared to prepare residents for the next steps in their return home. Following their stay at the camp, participants move on to job and skills training and other aspects of their reentry into community life.

Former warlords formally dissolve factions

LIBERIA The heads of Liberia's three factions last month signed an agreement to dissolve their movements' military wings and do away with violence, paving the way for them to stand at next year's elections.

"The parties also acknowledge that having ceased to exist as military forces in Liberia, they shall not own, use or carry any weapons, instrument or machineries of war and shall not engage in the use of force," the agreement said.

The former government of ex-president Charles Taylor, as well as two former rebel groups – Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) – all promised a peaceful future in a ceremony in the capital, Monrovia, which came three days after the UN-led disarmament program officially ended.

In keeping with a peace deal signed in August 2003, the three groups are now free to transform themselves into political parties to contest the next general election, which Liberia's broad-based transitional government hopes to hold in October 2005.

The official disarmament program in the heavily-forested nation officially finished on Sunday, Oct. 31 with more than 95,000 people taking part. UN envoy Jacques Klein said, however, that peacekeepers would carry on disarming former fighters in the remote north and south-east of the country.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) earlier issued an appeal for $58 million to help 47,000 ex-fighters in Liberia, warning that peace in the West African country could become unraveled if the former soldiers do not get urgently needed education and job training after laying down their weapons.

UN Begins six-month drive to return 260,000 displaced Liberians to their homes

Church

Delegates challenged to speak up for the persecuted church at International Christian Human Rights Conference

The opening of The International Christian Human Rights Conference in London

Michael Ireland

LONDON, ENGLAND (ANS) — About 1,000 delegates to the International Christian Human Rights Conference in London heard several speakers from around the world tell about their experiences with persecution and were challenged not to stand in silence after hearing powerful accounts of the persecuted church.

Delegates listened to speakers from China, Colombia, Eritrea and Sri Lanka tell them about the work they do and the persecution they endure.

Peter Xu founded a church in China which today runs into the millions. He claimed the church in China had grown from some 800,000 in the 1940s to an estimated 150 million today. He was a fellow prisoner of Brother Yun, the author of the bestselling *Heavenly Man* book, who describes Peter as his "father in the faith."

He was arrested five times, spending more than seven years in prison. On one occasion he was beaten and then tied by his arms to an iron gate for four hours so his feet were lifted from the ground and it was hard for him to breathe.

Having remained silent up to that point, he told them when he was taken down: "I can't sell out my Lord or my friends." He said he felt so much love for them at that time, despite his arms being puffed and black, that when his interrogator got out his book to record his confession, he simply told him: "I thank you." When his interrogator heard that, he did not question him again, but sentenced him to four years in prison.

Astrid Zuluaga works as a regional coordinator for the Colombian Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace (CRVP). She said that very often women were the ones who suffered the consequences of the violence against the church which had seen 80 pastors and church leaders assassinated during 2002-2003.

She said: "We have many widows, wives of pastors who have been killed. Some of them have lost their husbands who have been kidnapped and taken to other places and disappeared. Women have seen their children taken away and forced to join the armed groups. Women who still cry out because they don't know where their sons and husbands are."

Dr. Berhane Asmelash of Eritrea used his medical skills to serve his church and his country and then later as a church leader came to the UK for theological training. Today he is unable to return to Eritrea as it would almost certainly result in his imprisonment and probable torture.

Some 400 people are imprisoned for their faith in Eritrea since an edict in May 2002 banned all but three Christian denominations; Orthodox, Lutheran Evangelical and Roman Catholics. He explained how some Christians are tortured in prison and others exposed to malaria-carrying mosquitoes and locked in shipping containers in soaring temperatures.

He said: "People are only released if they agree to renounce their faith. Please pray for the government to reverse the edict and reopen places of worship. Please also pray for those in prison. We need to pray for people to speak out and not just to ignore the situation – they can make a difference."

Godfrey Yogarajah is General Secretary of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka and said that in the last year, 140 churches had been closed down. He also highlighted the danger posed to religious freedom by proposed anti-conversion legislation and constitutional reforms to make Buddhism the state religion.

He said: "You are our voice and your prayers and your voice have been an inspiration to us and we thank you for your burden for your persecuted brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka."

The delegates were challenged to respond to the needs of the persecuted church by saying together the pledge: "I pray that, as a follower of Christ, I will seek to comfort the persecuted and those who mourn. I will remember those in prison as if I were in prison and those who suffer for their faith as if I suffer. I will work for justice and truth. I will not stand in silence. I will tell someone else."

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of CSW said: "My desire is to see Christians throughout this nation refusing to stand in silence at the incredible injustices being faced by the worldwide persecuted Church. I believe that on Saturday we made a big step to seeing Christians in the UK providing a loud voice in support of those in our family who have had their voices taken away."

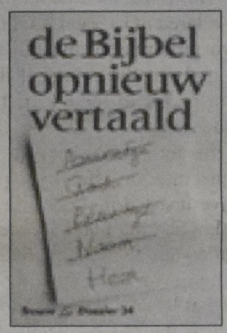
Eddie Lyle, Chief Executive Officer of Release International said: "We want to resource you to speak out for the persecuted church, a church that is growing in these seriously embattled situations. I have said before that I have a problem with the phrase a silent majority. We want you to go from here as a seriously noisy majority."

Delegates also heard from Ben Rogers, author of *A Land Without Evil* and Advocacy Officer on South Asia for CSW. He spoke on religious persecution in Burma and Pakistan. Mark Butler of Release International and Dr. Khataza Gondwe of CSW spoke about the religious violence in Nigeria.

Michael Ireland is an international British freelance journalist and Chief Correspondent for ASSIST News Service of Garden Grove, CA.

Delegates gather resouces

New Dutch Bible translation is best-seller



Andreas Havinga

Amsterdam (ENI) – A new Dutch translation of the Bible has catapulted into the best-seller lists in the Netherlands, despite survey findings that show a continuing decline in church attendance in the country.

The first copy of the New Bible Translation was presented to Dutch monarch Queen Beatrix in Rotterdam on October 27 and launched two days later in Antwerp for the Belgian market.

"Never before has there been so much media coverage of a book launch," the national association of booksellers said in a press release in which it predicted the Bible translation in Dutch from Hebrew and Greek would be one of the best-selling books of 2004.

One week after its launch, three of the various editions in which the Bible was produced were among the 10 top best-sellers in the Netherlands. The new translation aims to become the standard work for the Netherlands and Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region in neighbouring Belgium.

Belgian Cardinal Godfried Danneels said the new work was the first ecumenical Dutch translation of the Bible in Belgium, and also the first Dutch version in which Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews cooperated. Twenty-three churches and other religious groups were involved in the project that lasted 10 years and cost over 12 million euros. It was carried out by the Netherlands Bible Society in cooperation with the Catholic Bible Foundation and the two organizations' Flemish counterparts.

A survey in the Netherlands, whose findings were published to coincide with the launch of the new translation, reported that only 33 per cent of the Dutch population regard themselves as Christian.

The new Bible translation is being published in several editions, including a literary edition, intended to present the Bible as a classic of world literature to the general public, and a Jewish edition, due out in 2005, containing the Hebrew scriptures.

The launch of the new translation triggered several Bible-reading marathons throughout the Netherlands. One such marathon lasting five days was held in Rotterdam. Some 400 people took turns to read aloud the entire text of the new translation.

One of the most controversial issues was how to refer to God, with some theologians lobbying unsuccessfully to use non-gender specific terms to denote the deity, who is traditionally designated using masculine terminology, and called "Father."

Story

Dreams, farewells and nightmares

Allan Romkema

My father rounds the corner of the Van Cronenburchstraat on his bicycle. I don't want to look at his face and focus instead on the dozen or more tags that hang from the handlebar as reminders of the times he took the bike on a train or bus.

I know something my father does not know, and finally, I look up to his face. He does not see me because our neighbors, Veenstra and Van Riessen, call him over. When he reaches them, they grab the bike and tell him not go to the end of the street because an accident has happened. His face turns stony with fear. His eyes glaze. He tries to remount his bike, but the neighbors pull him off.

"Nee, Romkema! Nee!" I hear them say, their voices urgent. "You shouldn't go there! Its your son, Jan. An accident. Don't go there!" They hold him by the shoulders and wrestle with him. I stand on the sidewalk, frozen, smiling, my world spinning.

It is Tuesday, April 17, 1945. Two days after the liberation of our city.

The S.S. Volendam held fourteen hundred passengers and a crew of three hundred and twenty eight. She enjoyed an illustrious career in the merchant marine for most of her life. In August of 1940, she was torpedoed by German forces, then resurrected to carry Dutch soldiers to Indonesia in the late forties. In the early fifties, she transported emigrants to North America. The October 24, 1951 voyage from Rotterdam to Halifax via Le Havre and Southampton would be her last.

A short time after leaving Rotterdam we neared Hoek van Holland, a port situated on the west coast and our last glimpse of The Netherlands. It was now near eleven o'clock. On shore several dozen cars lined the coast, with headlights flashing and horns tooting – relatives and friends bidding a last farewell. All the passengers stood on the right side of the ship, and an eerie silence fell over those on the deck. Women cried silently; men looked sober.

Someone shouted goodbye over the distance and others reluctantly joined, sensing perhaps they were saying goodbye to part of themselves. Certainly they could not be heard from shore. Someone near us started singing the Dutch national anthem. Many of these men and women had risked their lives to fight in the Resistance or to shelter Jews. With what pride they had sung this song in 1945, after five years of German occupation!

And now they were fleeing from the country they loved? The breeze blew this lone voice out over the North Sea, giving it no chance to rebound.

As I looked up, I saw Dad's face. He bit his lower lip. He looked stern, fighting back his tears. Mom wore her black mantle-coat; her face was solemn, her eyes blank. She stood between Albert and Christine. She clasped their hands. They did not speak. I felt the gentle pressure of Dad's hand on my shoulder. Miep stood by herself just a little farther away.

I was at the railing – fighting back my own tears, aware of the moment's significance but unable to grasp its meaning. I knew we were leaving something behind.

After that final farewell, we walked to the lower deck. Dad and I were to sleep in a section reserved for men and boys over twelve. Mom, Miep, Albert and Christine would sleep in a section designated for women and children.

I did not sleep well that night.

The following morning, already in the port of Le Havre, the ship took on more emigrants for the journey to Halifax. Again, as in Rotterdam, relatives waved families goodbye, but the greetings were shouted in French – my first experience of a new world.

We left Le Havre that same night and sailed into Southampton the next morning. More passengers, this time British, boarded the S.S. Volendam. We watched them embark and again witnessed the sad farewells. What great promise must be waiting on the other side of the water that separated Europe from the New World!

The third day of our journey we were at sea. I got up at the usual seven a.m. to be at breakfast at seven-thirty. We shared a table in the dining room with the family VanBeek. The VanBeeks had two children: Rob, who was my age, and his younger sister, Elly, who was two years younger. Rob and I had already become friends, and that morning I was eager to see him. There was no school of course, and we had planned a few exploration activities.

After breakfast we decided to go first to the purser's room to check the ship's progress. On one wall of this room a large map of the Atlantic Ocean showed a dark line indicating our progress from Rotterdam to Le Havre to Southampton and now, just sliding past the southern coast of Ireland.

A number of men looked at the map and progress chart. Most of them spoke Dutch but several other languages blended into the babble. Rob and I made an effort to guess who spoke English and who spoke French. The Dutchmen spoke with authority. One of the men who had served in the merchant marine explained in some detail the route we would take. One of the Frenchmen, a somewhat swarthy-looking man of about forty, with stained teeth, unkempt hair and sinister eyes, made comments about the explanation, but only a few of his countrymen responded to what he was saying.

When the group dispersed, Rob and I decided to have a look at the kitchen. We walked through a maze of corridors, following the signs to the main dining room, knowing that the kitchen would be nearby. In the dining room a waiter scraped the congealed eggs from the breakfast dishes. His knife screeched against the plates with such force, that I covered my ears. We walked down a few corridors when the putrid smell of a large institutional kitchen hit my nostrils. We turned the final corner and passed through swinging doors.

There we saw the kitchen help washing and scrubbing the morning's dishes and, in a corner, I spotted my sister, Miep, who had signed up for kitchen duty to earn some pocket money. She and about ten other "volunteers" were seated in a circle peeling potatoes for our dinner.

We left quickly. Back on the upper deck, we decided to spend some time in the recreation lounge. It was deserted this early in the day except for the Frenchman with sinister eyes, eyes he now focused on a young woman in her early twenties. He spoke in urgent tones, gesticulating fiercely. He tapped the ashes from his cigarette onto the floor and put his face no more than five inches from the girl's. Rob and I slipped behind a counter and listened intently, but I could distinguish only one phrase?

"*Elle est morte!*" Exclaimed the Frenchman. "*Elle est morte!*"

The young woman was sobbing and the man, far from comforting her, became even more agitated. He pulled back his face, jabbed the cigarette into his mouth, took a deep suck, and as he blew out the smoke, slapped her across the face.

"Let's get out of here," I whispered to Rob, as I pushed him toward the end of the counter.

In search of our next adventure, we walked around the outside deck to get some fresh air. As we walked, Rob told me that his family had lived in Haarlem.

"I have just finished my first year in high school and I'm sure I won't miss it. But it was difficult to say goodbye to my friends and, well ... my girlfriend. We are going to write each other, and maybe her family will immigrate to Canada as well."

"What about your sister Elly?" I said.

"What about her?"

"Well, did she have a lot of friends in school? Did she have a boyfriend?"

"Oh, she has friends. We don't really get along. She can be a real little pest."

"Why did your family leave Holland?"

"My Mom has three brothers in Canada. We are going to Edmonton and stay with my mother's oldest brother until we have our own house. Do you have any relatives in Canada?"

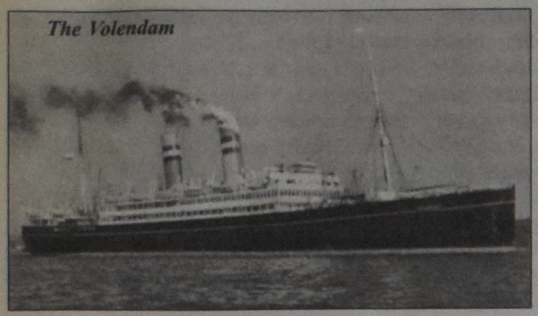
"My older brother, Cor, left last July. On this ship. He lives in Weston. That's in Ontario. My Dad's not a farmer so it was difficult for us to get a visa. When my brother had a chance to go alone, my Dad said that he could sponsor us later. But just after Cor left, Dad got word that his visa was granted. That's why we left just a few months after my brother. We hope that there is work for Dad and that we will like it there very soon."

We stood looking out at the blank horizon of the Atlantic.

"What is Edmonton like?" I asked.

Rob shook his head. "I don't know. But it's a city. And since we are used to living in a city, I'm sure we will like it."

"Weston's close to Toronto and Toronto's a city. But I really hope we will



get a house on the prairie and I get to own a horse."

We walked around the lower deck a few times and the bell signaled lunch. We made our way down to the dining hall where our families were already seated around their assigned table.

That night unfamiliar noises keep me awake: clunking, hissing, stomping, pounding and humming. Some I can trace to the ship's engines. Dad sleeps three feet above me, at least so it seems. Rob and his father are a few rows of beds to the left of us. I feel trapped. Getting up is no option because there is nowhere to go. I close my eyes and review the events of the past several days.

How long ago seems our final day in Leeuwarden! My last bike ride on the Nieuwe Stad, my last day at school in the Margaretha De Heerstraat, my goodbye to friends, to the Bos family and to Geesje? It had all happened in another life. I see once again the gigantic crate packed with our belongings, our farewell to Opa Van der Ploeg? No, I block that out of my mind. No more farewells, please.

I mull over the day: Rob and I, the Frenchman with the piercing eyes and his heated discussion with the young woman in the lounge ... *elle est morte ... elle est morte.*

In my dream I once more run after the horse-drawn flatbed that comes through our street every day. We try to catch up with it and jump on the back for a free ride. I am five years old. My little sister, Tineke, cannot run as fast as I can. She's almost within reach when she falls against the right rear wheel of the wagon. She tumbles onto the pavers. I wake up with a scream. "No! No!"

"Allan, go to sleep, jongen," my Dad says from above.

I have broken out in a sweat and shiver. I feel scared and lost and I dare not tell my Dad, not here, not on this ship, in a room with thirty strangers.

I doze off again. Now the sinister Frenchman shows up, wearing a Nazi uniform: helmet, boots, cap, and pockets on his jacket, the wide belt. He shouts orders: "*Raus, Raus, wir mussen Raus!*"

And I see the French Nazi scramble out of a bus left in our street, my street, the Van Cronenburchstraat. Thirty German soldiers tumble out of the bus, rolling onto the street where we always play soccer. They steal four bicycles from the Wieringas and the Veenstras, and the French Nazi, on the newest bike, leads the bunch. All the others run after him and disappear down the Wybrand de Geeststraat, past my school, past our church, going east towards Groningen. But they leave the bus behind.

My brother Jan and his friends climb into the bus and find German helmets and guns and hand grenades. They jump out of the bus and proudly display their treasures to their friends. Then Jan and his friend hear a humming noise in the hand grenade and as they put it to their ears, the grenade explodes. *Elle est morte.... Elle est morte.*

"No! No!"

"Allan, what's the matter?" Dad asks. He is standing by my bunk, wiping the sweat off my face.

"We can't leave Jan and Tineke!" I want to say, but do not.

I do fall asleep again but only after I picture in my mind the gravestone so far away in Leeuwarden:

In memory of our dear children
Jan and Tineke
Romkema
Safe in the arms of Jesus
1943 1945

The next morning I was sick. I vomited three times that day. I did not see Rob and I did not eat. I had never been that sick and I vowed never to journey by boat again. I did not get my steady feet back until we were within one day of Halifax.

This is an excerpt from Chapter Three of Allan Romkema's memoir Where Is Here. *As you see, it reads like a novel. Highly recommended. The book is available at a number of Christian Bookstores and at* **www.Oakwoodpress.com** *or write to: Allan Romkema, 122 Brant Street, Oakville ON L6K 3X6 or call* ***905-845-6174***

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

The best we can hope for

November sunshine is like weak coffee: it's better than nothing, but it doesn't truly satisfy. It leaves you craving the real deal. I drove down to visit my mother yesterday. It was the one sunny day we had this week and I couldn't shake the feeling I should have been at home, raking leaves and emptying flowerbeds. Nevertheless, the sun shining through the windshield warmed my shoulders and my heart. It wasn't until I got out of the car that the chilly wind brought me back to reality.

Four months ago my brother and I put my mother into a nursing home. She didn't want to go, but it was necessary for her safety and my brother's sanity. We had come to a crisis point. Jim couldn't possibly keep looking after her in her apartment. I live more than two hours away, and my brother has Mom's power of attorney for personal care, so I really don't have a lot to say. She was in no shape to be left on her own, and the only option that made sense was long-term extended care.

Jim told Mom she would have to move. As a matter of fact, he took her for a tour of the nursing home one Saturday and told her she would be moving in the following Monday. She forgot. Really. (Short-term memory loss was at least half the reason we needed to get her into a home.) Meanwhile, she had told herself a story about there being "at least a dozen people" on the waiting list ahead of her. It would be a "couple of years," she figured, before her turn would come up. And she confided in me more than once, that she hoped she would be dead before that happened.

I don't think I'll ever forget the look on Mom's face that Monday morning. Confusion, fear and a sense of betrayal mingled in her eyes as she tried to understand what was happening. Jim wrote down her medications and personal data on the nursing home form. He looked like the ex-cop he is, stoic and determined. Tears burned my eyes and my throat felt as if it would explode. I left the room to pack a small bag for her. The rest of her clothing would come later.

He finished the form and stood up. "Okay, Mother, time to go," he said.

"Where?" She asked.

"To the nursing home," he answered. He looked at me, tears in his eyes.

"I don't want to go," she said. Just for a minute, deep down inside, part of me wished she would muster the strength to refuse.

"Come on, Ma," I said, "we have to go now." Jim helped her to her feet and I fetched her walker.

July and August were hard on her emotionally. Physically Mom responded almost immediately to the excellent care she received. Little by little she adjusted to the routine of the home. She began to say positive things about her surroundings. It's a bright and clean place, with nice people who work there. The food is good. There's a lovely backyard with lots of flowerbeds and birdfeeders, a big gazebo and park benches. She has a pleasant roommate, even though there's not much to talk about.

Jim took her to a geriatric specialist who prescribed what Mom calls "memory pills." She'd been taking them for a couple of weeks, when I called one afternoon and she seemed especially chipper.

"So," I ventured, "have you been taking your memory pills?"

There was silence on the line. "I don't know," she paused, then said, "I can't remember."

We both laughed.

I try to visit her every three weeks. Our visits, like our conversations, are pretty predictable. Yesterday was no exception. I took her out for lunch. Afterward we drove to Port Dover, where she lived for 20 years, and walked along the pier to the lighthouse, then back down to where the fishing tugs are moored. We sat on a bench and she watched a seagull take off.

"If there's another life, I'd wish to come back as a bird," she said.

"Not me," I answered, "I'm going to heaven."

But Mom doesn't want to talk about heaven. We have the same conversation almost every time we're together.

We walked a little further to Tim Horton's. As Mom sipped her coffee, a little girl played at the table beside us. She tapped her shiny pink running shoes together, then bounced over to the glass counter where the fancy tarts and cupcakes were. Her strawberry blonde ponytail danced from side to side, then she pressed her freckled nose against the glass. I watched my mother watching her. A little smile spread across my mom's mouth. November sunshine.

I drove home as the sun was setting. I thought about how in essence, November's sunshine is the same as July's, but it lacks the potency of summer. Still, at this time of year, when the plowed fields and bare trees devour what precious daylight we have, November sunshine is the best we can hope for. It's a reminder of summer's warmth, and a reassurance of the sun's presence (albeit distant).

I thought about my mother, in the November of her life. And I prayed, as I often do, that God who made the seasons, will open her eyes to the glorious prospect of better days ahead – not reincarnated as a bird, but set eternally free by the saving grace of God's own Son. Miracles happen. Even in November.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com

Review

The story of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada

The Canadian Story of the CRC: Its First Century
Tymen E. Hofman
Guardian Books, CDN 19.95 (US 15.95)
Reviewed by Harry DerNederlanden

It was 1904, one year before Alberta became a province. After traveling by train from Manhattan, Montana to Lethbridge, Alberta – a journey of 400 miles – Rev. James Holwerda was picked up and taken by horse-drawn wagon to the small settlement of Dutch homesteaders in New Nijverdal. He traveled all that way just to baptize the baby of one of his former charges, who had moved north across the border to homestead land in the Alberta Territory. There was no church, so the baptism service was held in the newly built house of Jan Postman.

So begins the history of the Christian Reformed church in Canada as told by Tymen Hofman in *The Canadian Story of the CRC: its first century*.

About one year later the community formally organized the Nijverdal CRC under the leading of Revs. Holwerda and Botbijl. Botbijl was sent to Alberta by Classis Pella, Iowa in response to a petition sent by the new settlers, but he came there as a missionary, not as the congregation's pastor. For the first few years the worship services there were led by an elder, who read a Dutch sermon. A home missionary visited periodically to provide direction to the small congregation and advise the consistory.

About one year after the group in southern Alberta built their first church, Classis Pacific of the CRC sent another missionary north. This time to Edmonton, also in response to an invitation. The First Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton was organized in 1910 and first met in a tent on the corner of Jasper Avenue and 109th Street.

In his history of the CRC in Canada, Tymen Hofman has written an account filled with facts, anecdotes, personalities and events, one that every Canadian member of the CRC, especially those part of the immigrant generation will want to read.

Before World War II, the CRC in Canada consisted of 2,274 members – slightly more than Grandville Avenue CRC, the largest congregation in the US. In the post-war years, the churches south of the border gave unstintingly to help tens of thousands of Reformed immigrants from The Netherlands get settled in their new country.

They supplied home missionaries and fieldmen in both western and eastern Canada. While the fieldmen helped find sponsors and jobs for the immigrants and helped them adjust in hundreds of practical ways, the home missionaries formed them into Christian communities that supported one another spiritually and helped each other through the hard times.

As he unfolds the story, Hofman provides short sidebars detailing something of the lives of some of the main actors in the story; however, it was more than the actions of a few committed individuals that counted. The entire CRC in the US, with its synods and classes and hard-working committees pitched in to help.

But that is only part of the story Hofman tells, for he follows the unfolding story as these energetic and committed immigrants took on a huge variety of challenges that they saw as part of their Kingdom calling.

At first the newly-formed churches included Reformed Christians not just from different parts of the Netherlands (each with its own dialect and customs) but also from various Reformed denominations, so it was something of an ecumenical fellowship. But only for a short while. Inevitably perhaps, divisions came – not just along old denominational lines but also between those more pietistically inclined and the gung-ho Kuyperians. The issue of membership in non-Christian unions first raised its head in the east.

But the Calvinists soon had their own publications that got everyone talking and thinking. At first one in the west – the *Canadian Calvinist* – and one in the east – *Contact*. But these soon merged into *Calvinist Contact*, later renamed *Christian Courier*. Hofman also gives a brief account of the roles played by such publications as *De Wachter*, the short-lived *Church and Nation* and later of the *Torch and Trumpet* (later called *The Outlook*).

As if settling into their jobs, learning the language and the culture and organizing new churches weren't enough to keep the new immigrants busy, they also very quickly organized Christian school societies and began planning to build schools. And why stop at grade schools and high schools. Already in 1956 a group of leaders met to talk about the need of a Christian university in Canada, creating the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies, which eventually became the present Institute for Christian Studies.

The highlights of the history of the Reformational movement, including the influence of Dr. Evan H. Runner, are touched on by Hofman, as well as the founding of King's and Redeemer, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, and the efforts to shape political life in Canada according to the Kuyperian model that led to the formation of the Citizens for Public Justice.

In other chapters Hofman reflects on how, after creating the Canadian branch, the CRC as a whole was influenced by the Canadians and their Kuyperian vision. One of those influences, suggests hofman, was a new emphasis on the diaconal task of the churches which lead to the formation of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Hofman packs a great deal of interesting material into this relatively modest book (260 pp), including discussions of issues raised by the Committee for Contact with the Government and wide ranging assessments of the state of the CRC at a conference held in Calgary in 1979.

Moving to more recent times, Hofman gives short overviews of the influence of the charismatic movement on the Canadian CRC, polarization over women in office and the resulting schism and many more bits of history that have entered into the texture of the Canadian CRC. We get just enough information and quotations to recall the issues and the passions without getting bogged in the details.

Just listing all the history Hofman touches on perhaps makes it sound as if the book is a tedious recounting of facts. It isn't. He manages to convey quite a bit of the color and personality involved in the events and does not shrink back from calling it as he sees it. Ty Hofman has done a commendable and courageous work in bringing this book to press at a time when he was struggling with health issues.

In the penultimate chapter, some of the most prominent leaders in the Canadian CRC over the last 50 years are given room to present their assessment of what has been accomplished and learned over the short life of the immigrant church's existence and the challenges that it now faces. That chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

Ty Hofman

This is what some readers have said about Hofman's book:

"This book records a significant passage in the history of the both the Christian Reformed Church and Canadian immigration. It doesn't pretend to give the last word or the only word on the matter. Rather, its passion should provoke other accounts that will constitute an important conversation of memory, while its participant-observer's point of view will provide great service to future historians."

– James D. Bratt, Professor of History, Calvin College

"This story needed to be told and Tymen Hofman is best qualified to tell it. His careful record of the historical data is lit up by numerous anecdotes. (Do read the sidebars and boxes!) Meet the saints and sinners whose works Hofman describes and evaluates. All who love the CRC in Canada as Hofman does (see Appendix) should own this book."

– Andrew Kuyvenhoven

"Tymen Hofman tells the story of the CRC's development in Canada with candor and grace. It's an important story because it has so much to do with the development of the CRC in North America. One cannot fully understand the CRC as a binational denomination without reading Hofman's account. I recommend it."

– Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director of Ministries Christian Reformed Church

"Reverend Hofman provides a wealth of information on the history of the CRC in Canada. He has done careful research and he writes with the pastoral heart of someone who has personally played a role in that history and who has deep connections with many of the key people and events he describes. The Canadian Story of the CRC offers readers a valuable and engaging resource in understanding and appreciating the CRC in Canada. I highly recommend it."

— Robert De Moor, Editor of The Banner

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The Lord's Prayer

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors (Part 2)

"Forgive us our debts." All of us are influenced by others as well as by circumstances and at the same time we exert an influence on others. That is why in our guilt we do not stand alone. Jesus places us all in a row, one beside the other. He does not speak of greater or lesser sinners; he does not make a distinction. Of course, that does not mean that there are no degrees of severity of sin committed, just as there are endless variations in the good we can do. Yet, we must all stand alongside others when it comes to our transgressions.

Seen from above we are all as big, or rather as small as the next person. Those who continue to harbor rash judgements on others or who paint others uglier and meaner than themselves still have little insight into the depth of their own sinfulness. When we truly understand our own nature, we tend to become more exacting about our own behavior and more forgiving towards others. Guilt feelings can make us very self-absorbed. So much so that it can destroy our whole personality.

But Jesus wants to redeem us from that self-centeredness. He teaches us solidarity with others. He teaches us to be aware not only of the evil in our lives but also in the lives of others. Then we learn to pray not only for ourselves but also for those around us. Therefore, these little words "us" and "our" open our eyes to the fact that apart from our individual sins there are also corporate sins – of a family, a company, a church or a people, of a race, a social group or whole nations. Such communal sinfulness nevertheless involves me personally as well.

"As we also..." Have you ever noticed how often Jesus in his teaching warns us against being merciless? And Jesus accompanies those warnings with dire consequences for those who fail to heed him. He makes it abundantly clear that we should not count on God's forgiveness if we are not fully and cheerfully ready to forgive those who have wronged us. Our willingness to forgive others must never cease. Do you remember Peter's question, "...how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" And the answer Jesus gave, "...seventy times seven times."

When I sow oppression or abuse, then I will reap the same. You cannot ask for grace for yourself when you refuse to be compassionate towards others. Asking for forgiveness is like saying to our Father that we have nothing more to offer; no claims to make; no IOUs to collect; we only have debts which we can't pay.

Refusing to forgive others is like saying that we still have moral claims to make and chips to cash in. It means staying outside the realm of God's grace. In the end, if we live our lives without compassion and forgiveness we will find our stubborn selves excluded from the kingdom of God's grace and favor.

"If any one of you is without sin ..."

It is true that people can make our lives miserable by repeatedly stepping on our toes and our hearts. Sometimes they exasperate us and cause us endless pain and abuse. They also crucified Jesus and later stoned Stephen to death. But note the response that Jesus gave and that Stephen learned to say after him, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus prayed this prayer with perfect sincerity. Unwillingness to pray this prayer after him must be considered as pure poison. Those who refuse to love their enemies exclude themselves from the circle of God's love, who searched us out "while we were yet sinners."

This petition, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" is like a pair of scales. The scale of our receiving forgiveness goes up when the other scale is filled with our willingness to grant forgiveness to our neighbors, and visa versa.

Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

The last words of this parable of the Unmerciful Servant are like a two-edged sword. With this story Jesus completely destroys any vain notion that mercy can come our way without any serious attempt on our part to forgive our neighbors. I once asked a man who had been treated unfairly and thereafter carried a hateful vengeance in his heart to read these words from Matthew 18. Before he finished reading he became so enraged that he threw the Bible into the farthest corner of the room. Hate is a dangerous thing. At first we control our hatred, but before long it will control us.

The Echo from on high

"As we forgive our debtors." Let me use some examples to show what Jesus meant by these words. If you have ever heard an echo you will know what I mean. Your words are immediately returned to you from a distant mountain exactly the way you spoke them. Similarly, if you say, "I won't forgive you," God's echo from on high responds, "I won't forgive you."

Children sometimes use a gadget that allows them to copy a picture onto another sheet of paper by tracing the original. That is a perfect illustration for us. If I, insignificant person that I am, say, "I won't forgive him!" our words are carried up to Heaven, and God will pronounce those same words over us. When I say, "She will never come into my house!" God will say like an echo, 'She will never come into my House!" If I ever curse someone here on earth the same words will resound over me.

That's why Jesus teaches us to pray, "...forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." And he tells us in Matthew 7:1-2, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." If I refuse to forgive anyone, anytime, I bring the same judgement down on myself.

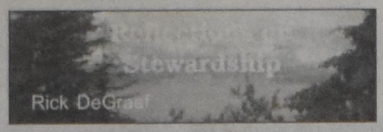
The Bible says that God may turn his face against us leaving us without hope.

* * *

Finally, I will ask those two questions again. Can you pray this prayer? Do you want to pray this prayer? Do you really want to become small before God and humbly confess your sins and shortcomings? Do you, like a trusting little child, want to place all your sins, the ones you know as well as the ones you don't know, into the hands of your heavenly Father and say, "Father forgive me"?

And are you willing to add, as we forgive our debtors? Then you will honestly want to pray with Jesus and Stephen, "Father, forgive them."

Christian Living



Gifted by God – my treasures

A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ...Jesus answered. "...You know the commandments...." "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Luke 18:18-22

God has entrusted to me lots of stuff. Nice stuff, useful stuff, entertaining stuff, convenience stuff, useless stuff, and lots of junk – our homes and garages are full of stuff. We like stuff, and if the building boom in big box stores and malls continues – we like to buy even more stuff!

As we accumulate, we also have a tendency to put our security in our stuff. The more I have, the more secure I feel, or the more there is to fuss and worry over. We trade simple dependence on the creator and replace it with a dependence on the created: my assets, my investments, my estate, etc.

Which gets us to the heart of the scripture above. That rich young ruler, like many of us, had put his hope and his security on his wealth – and he couldn't give it up for an opportunity to be a disciple of Jesus. But before we get too critical of him, just think how Jesus and his disciples must have looked to this 'certain ruler' – a man who was in a position of authority and respect. Jesus and his followers – did they look like a bunch of 'do nothings?'

As we reflect on our attitude towards our stewardship of our treasures, I pose this question:

Is your wealth a stumbling block – holding you back from being available for God's kingdom? Are you hanging unto your wealth too tightly, too close to your chest? Do you tend to guard it, protect it and keep it secure so that it's not easily available for Kingdom purposes – a picture not unlike the one-talented servant in Jesus' parable of the talents?

But, on the flip side, our wealth can be an effective tool that multiplies what we can do for Kingdom purposes – if we willingly share and make it available.

Over the eleven years I served in India and Bangladesh for CRWRC, it was not unusual for our work to run into constraints that limited our ministry. Sometimes, it was people constraints: we needed more competent Christian nationals to staff our projects so that we could meet our goals. Other times, especially as the program work matured, it was resource constraints: money (budget) and equipment that limited us to follow-up new opportunities for ministry. It takes people and resources for ministry to happen.

But it's not just in overseas missions that this happens. It happens in my own church. A group of people has a vision and passion for a growing youth ministry. They meet and develop a plan that includes staff and key events to interest the youth. But the flicker of vision is soon snuffed out when the finance people say there's no budget for it.

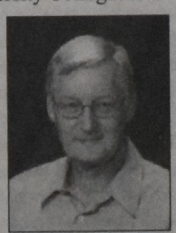
Our wealth is an important tool! I believe that's why God entrusted to us in the first place. He chooses to bring about Kingdom ministry through you and me and the resources that he has entrusted to us. I also believe that God is ready to give us more wealth, but there is accountability and maybe at times, tremendous disappointment for God.

The Bible challenges us to have more so that we can do more for God and his Kingdom (check out Malachi 3:10). But that's also where the rub is. When we are blest with more, somehow God loses out. Yes, evidence in our churches indicates that as we get more, more does seem to go to Kingdom ministry, but it doesn't stay in step with how much we've been blest. Somehow, whether unknowingly or not, we seem to be able to skim off more for ourselves and become more numb to the urgency of getting out the message about the Greatest Treasure (CC, Aug. 27). That's where God's disappointment sets in.

Ask yourself, is there something in your life that you treasure too much, that has shackled you and hinders you from being available for Kingdom work: serving as an elder or deacon, a Sunday School teacher, a GEMs or Cadet Counselor or Alpha group leader, just to name a few. Sometimes our possessions possess us and take up inordinate amounts of our time for their upkeep. You may need to give away some, even all of your earthly treasures so that you might in return receive heavenly treasure.

Stewardly tip: RRSP

You can have a RRSP and invest it in ministry. For example, our Christian University Colleges and Christian Education Foundations often need capital to expand and grow their institutions. Your investment does more than provide financial growth and stability for your retirement, it also supports the development of future Christian leaders through Christian education.



Readers: We want to share your 'Stewardly tips' so that we all can do our part to make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Please write or email or visit the CC website. Please leave your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or, if we need to, we can ask you for more details.

Next issue: Year-end gifts to charity

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The new slave trade: trafficking in women

The Natashas: The New Global Sex Trade by Victor Malarek (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2003)
Reviewed by
Sonya Vanderveen-Feddema

In *The Natashas: The New Global Sex Trade*, Victor Malarek presents a chilling picture of the lives of young girls and women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. An investigative journalist for more than 30 years – for the *Globe and Mail*, *The Fifth Estate*, and *W-Five* – Malarek has covered stories worldwide. Yet, he says, never before has he been "as struck by the senseless disregard for human dignity" as when he researched this book.

Who are the Natashas and what forces have led to their exploitation? Malarek points out that they are part of the fourth wave of trafficking for sexual exploitation that the world has experienced in the last three decades. The first wave in the 1970s consisted of Southeast Asian women – mostly from Thailand and the Philippines. In the early 1980s the second wave of women came from Africa – mostly from Ghana and Nigeria. The third wave from Latin America arrived soon afterward.

The fourth wave consists of women from the former Soviet republics. According to Malarek, for over a decade since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, and due to the economic, political, and social disintegration that ensued, approximately 175,000 women a year have been lured into sexual slavery.

Malarek explains the ploys traffickers use to trap women. Perhaps the most common is the promise of lucrative jobs abroad, such as waitresses, models, or nannies. Desperate for work and brighter futures and stuck in economies rife with unemployment, young women answer the help wanted ads, unaware that they will be forced to work as prostitutes. Other women are trapped by so-called "matchmaking services" that specialize in "mail-order brides" or are drawn across borders by new "boyfriends." Children in orphanages are especially vulnerable to traffickers, who either lure them away with false promises or kidnap them. Sometimes, trafficked women – hoping to evade continually being used by men – agree to entice new victims.

According to Malarek, "trafficking in human beings is now the third-largest moneymaking venture in the world, after illegal weapons and drugs." He adds that the United Nations estimates that organized crime makes proceeds of $12 billion a year from this trade. In fact, without the presence of organized crime rings, trafficking would not "flourish" like it does.

Through several case studies, Malarek shows how easy it is for criminals to enter the sex trade and cash in on astounding profits. The risks to criminals of being caught and severely punished are minimal compared to involvement in the illegal trade of guns and drugs.

Organized crime is only one of the causes of the proliferation of trafficking of human beings. Ma-larek says, "Many observers believe that the [Inter]net is singularly responsible for the incredible explosion in the trafficking of women and girls worldwide." He calls the Internet "the biggest whorehouse on the planet," providing men with a venue to, along with other things, reserve specific girls or women for sex tours, to engage in live interactive sex shows, or to make arrangements to sexually interact with a "mail-order bride" in her native country.

Malarek points out that though much has been written about prostitutes and trafficked women because they are willing to share their stories, little has been written about the men who use them and why they do so.

Gleaning information from the increasingly large number of websites that offer women for sale, he discovered the deluded rationale for sexually exploiting girls and women. Perhaps the loudest argument these men employ is that sex is a biological need that must be satisfied. Therefore, they claim, purchasing sex is a natural activity. Prostitution and trafficking are seen as nothing more or less than a "commodity exchange."

Whatever the reasons men frequent prostitutes, Malarek argues that the world of prostitution is rife with hypocrisy and double standards. He points out that the women are given shameful and disgraceful names – "prostitutes," "whores," "hookers," "harlots," and "sluts." On the other hand, the men who use these women are called kinder names – "patrons," "johns," and "clients." Malarek adds, "This wordsmithing is not without purpose – it makes it easier for men and society to objectify, commodify and then dismiss the victims."

For trafficked women, freedom

Continued on page 15...

Healthy congregations head outwards

SUSTAINING Pastoral EXCELLENCE

James C. Dekker

After a lively debate last June, the Christian Reformed Church Synod approved a denominational priority for the next years: to maintain or develop healthy local congregations.

What's to debate? Isn't it a given that congregations be healthy?

The issues are complex and crucial. At stake is not merely survival of local congregations, but also the direction of the CRCNA in the 21st century.

Will we keep sliding into ever more loosely affiliated congregations, but with a shrinking identity as a community of Reformed Christians? Will we ignore mission to the broader community and world? Or will we discover new forms of body life that witness to Christ's saving power in expanding rings of family, congregation, community, region, nation and world? Will we try to do this on our own? Or will we team up with compatible congregations, crossing denominational lines, forming new associations and networks?

Sources for healthy churches

Healthy congregations need not remain vague dreams for all but a few charismatic leaders. The first apostles were not super-preachers, yet the early church reached outward faithfully, creatively and winsomely with the message of salvation. Those congregations struggled with a hostile culture. Today healthy churches' long-time members will grow in the faith and knowledge of Christ via outreach and cultural engagement.

Many books discuss healthy congregational development. Three of the last decade's best are Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, Waldo Werning, *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church* and Peter Steinke *Healthy Congregations*. All three describe qualities to help leaders focus on specific areas of healthy church life. They also lean heavily on the book of Acts. It is the best and basic source for healthy congregations to find principles and examples to adapt and apply to their situations and times.

Acts gives us several "musts" of church health: biblical preaching, diaconal outreach, God-centered leaders, establishing new congregations and more. Yet, developing healthy congregations is never a mechanical, cookie-cutter exercise. Until Jesus returns we can use Acts as an organic blueprint to build churches that fit people and respond to culture.

Healthy churches follow the outward spiraling map Jesus gives us in Acts 1:8: "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." They never stay right where they are born physically, spiritually or intellectually. They engage other cultures and areas, never under their own steam, but with the Holy Spirit leading. The first local church started with eleven scared men. As he promised, God did not leave them alone, but sent the Spirit with power, sanctifying human abilities to speak, teach, heal.

The rest of this article will be more a teaser than a treatise. I'll sketch two characteristics of healthy congregations that, though less obvious than those mentioned above, are nevertheless crucial both for keeping members healthy and strong and also for heading outwards, not becoming complacent and isolated.

Discipline

Along the way healthy congregations face fear and uncertainty, trouble from within. Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon the Magician brought lying, deceit and corruption to the early church. Yet, the pattern of accountability set by Peter (Acts 5:3 ff and 8:20 ff) shows that sin can be challenged and accounted for – though not always with the fatal results of Ananias and Sapphira. Sadly, saints who are also forgiven sinners today will and do harm each other. Yet, they must hold each other accountable, setting and maintaining ethical boundaries.

This is nothing other than church discipline, which the Heidelberg Catechism calls one of the "keys of the kingdom" (Q&A 83). Some have complained that CRCs no longer practice discipline. Perhaps not often in the formal sense of three steps, with forms read and people excommunicated who haven't shown up in years. That's not living discipline; that's traditionalist futility.

Yet, people are forgiven and renewed, and a community grows if believers lay their sins deliberately at the foot of the cross. Serious, meaningful relationships among members will nurture mutual pastoral care and responsibility. Small groups can provide such a venue. So can more traditional settings. Sensitive and flexible deacon and elder teams can get to know people in their districts. They are not just names to be visited, but God's people with whom to eat and play, worship and weep.

I have seen such discipline take shape movingly when a woman described her experience of salvation after suffering sexual abuse. Her honest story delivered in a safe public forum, encouraged several others to disclose privately their own sufferings and sins in order to seek reconciliation with God and others. Such hard steps contributed to the health of the individuals, the fellowship groups and the congregation in which they took part. The church grew in spirit and number.

Justice

The last crucial characteristic of a healthy church I will touch is that of promoting justice. This often ignored, even feared, trait of a healthy church too has roots in Scripture and the church.

Governing authorities opposed the early church because Christ's claim to "all authority" threatened their power (Matthew 28:18). Yet, Christians who stoutly viewed themselves as loyal, albeit sometimes critical, citizens found traction on the slippery roads of Roman society. Twice in Acts Paul claims his birthright of Roman citizenship when unjustly arrested (16:35 ff. and 22:25 ff.).

Far from using selfish ploys, Paul acts as a loyal citizen who recognizes the duties of governments and officials to their subjects. As Paul himself later wrote in Romans 13, governments are responsible to provide citizens a climate of safety and well-being. If Christian individuals and communities fail to hold governments accountable or to encourage them when they do good, they are not solid citizens of the lands where God places them. That is part of giving God and Caesar their due, as Jesus says in Matthew 22:21. Christians owe limited respect to governments – even totalitarian ones.

Even where Christians do not at first promote justice, health can bloom from sickness. Take Onesimus, a runaway slave from Philemon, the host of a house church. Where is Philemon's sense of justice? Where is runaway Onesimus's respect for his master? Such is the ethical conflict in which Christians can become tangled because we are, willy-nilly, part of complex societal systems. Yet, Paul does not uncritically accept Roman slavery. He urges Philemon to accept Onesimus back as a brother, not as economic property.

The congregation meeting in Philemon's home was doubtless healthier after Onesimus became a brother than when he was a slave. Possibly not everyone recognized or liked the new situation. Still, to stay healthy the young church had to stretch with new counter-cultural exercise of justice or it would have died.

And today? Many congregations have developed programs to host refugees, feed and sometimes house homeless people. Some have complained about "undeserving poor" or even "those foreigners." Such people forget that not only are we all sojourners; many were refugees and immigrants two generations ago.

Often in the course of such programs congregations must deal with unjust or inconsistently applied government policies. Take the situation of Benjamin Osei, youth pastor with several churches in Toronto's Jane and Finch neighborhood. Before and after his deportation early in 2004, churches across Canada communicated diligently with high immigration officials, finally gaining promises of cooperation.

Such principled and persistent work will not merely win a hearing from the greater society for churches working in the name of Christ. The congregations will grow healthier, stretching to a society that needs to see them. Also, in doing good to the least of Jesus' brothers, they mysteriously do good to Jesus himself (Matthew 25:40). Or, as Hebrews 13:2 reminds us, angels will find hospitality without our knowing it. What could be more delightful and healthy than serving angels food?

James C. Dekker is pastor of Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario.

The new slave trade...*cont. from p.14*

is elusive at best. A few are rescued. Some escape. However, Malarek says, "for many release comes as the result of disease, insanity or total depletion. In the end, some give up and kill themselves." Still, there are individuals and organizations that work diligently to rescue trafficked girls and women.

Particularly moving is Malarek's account of Don Cesare, a Roman Catholic priest whose life's mission is to rescue trafficked women entrapped by prostitution in Italian cities. In a heavily fortified compound, armed guards and video cameras offer protection to approximately 90 young women from Eastern Europe who have escaped from their pimps. Don Cesare's life has been threatened on more than one occasion by Albanian mobsters. But he persists in his work.

Malarek relates a poignant story about Don Cesare leading a small procession of women at night to the Adriatic Sea just outside the fortress: "They stand, silently facing the sea they had crossed. The priest raises his arms, blesses the rolling waves and begins to pray. The women stare out onto the water, their lips moving in prayer for the victims who have yet to be rescued."

Particularly scathing is Malarek's analysis of the "complacency and complicity" of men in positions of law and order and other leadership roles – the cop who walks the beat, UN peacekeepers, politicians, border guards, court officials, and staff of international aid organizations – who turn a blind eye to the tragedy of human trafficking because of their own lust and acceptance of purchased sex. He also critiques the US government's efforts to stop the trafficking problem, and the limitations and failures of its Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act passed in October 2000.

The Natashas is a deeply engaging book, which left this reader with a fuller understanding of the scope of global trafficking in human beings and the immense suffering it has caused. Malarek's narrative style makes the book, despite its weighty topic, easy to read and understand.

Have we been fair to the pacifists? ... *part 2*

Bert den Boggende

The problem with the 1939 report is not only what it states, but also what is left out. There is nothing about the nature of the church or about the Kingdom of God, both crucial aspects for pacifism (the new report cannot avoid dealing with them). And there is nothing about the history of the early church. Historians generally agree that the early church was pacifist, although they don't necessarily agree about the reasons. Do the "evils of present-day pacifism" also pertain to the pacifism of the early church? Unwittingly, the condemnation of pacifism seems to imply a condemnation of the early church. The least the new committee can do is to survey the attitude of the early church in regards to war and look if indeed the early church was pacifist, and, if so, what the reasons were.

Pacifists have contended that after emperor Constantine the church made a 180 degree turn. That date may be questionable, for it is known that at least during the second half of the second century soldiers were being accepted into the church, albeit under strenuous conditions. But why were these conditions imposed?

Sometimes people refer to Christ's and Peter's encounter with soldiers; since they did not condemn them as soldiers, they argue that the early church was not pacifist. But this is an argument from silence, and hence not valid unless it can be corroborated by positive evidence. If the early church was indeed pacifist, then the question needs to be raised whether that position is still adequate for our present-day much more complex society.

Finally, the 1939 report has next to nothing about the attitude and actions of Jesus. Pacifists have argued that during the early period Jesus was regarded as the ethical norm, a position they hold is still valid for today. It is true that many liberals – and many pacifists are theological liberals – regard Jesus as no more than the greatest moral example. While disagreeing with the "no more," there is no good reason why non-liberals could not accept Jesus as the greatest moral example. It would be in accordance with the 1977 report, which states that Jesus is the climax of revelation.

If Jesus is not the ethical norm, the church tends to take its norms from the social order.

Based on inadequate exegesis, lack of historical perspective, and misleading statements about pacifism, the 1939 report states that pacifism "is fundamentally to be condemned because it is in irreconcilable conflict with the teaching of Scripture and of our Creed on the duty of government in the matter of war and the corresponding duty of the Christian citizen." Assertion has replaced proof.

Jesus as the Prince of Peace

The 1977 report was more sympathetic towards pacifism, noting that there was some pacifism in the early church (it does not state that the early church was pacifist), that pacifism has a long and respected tradition, and that those who differ about pacifism should at least accept each other. At least in theory pacifists should be welcome in the CRC. Moreover, the report provides a better biblical basis for its arguments.

Still, there are some weaknesses, of which I mention only one. This report, like the others, refers to Jesus as the Prince of Peace. It leaves the impression that the meaning of this title is above all spiritual, making Jesus' mission so unique and so focused on salvation from sin that his actions and attitude seem irrelevant to ethics. The CRC often prides itself on its involvement in society; in fact, that involvement sets it apart from much of fundamentalism. **But to suggest that this title has only relevant to the spiritual or to the future is really a form of interim ethics.**

The 1977 report leaned heavily on the Old Testament, giving inadequate attention to the fact that with Jesus something new has entered into human history, and paying only lip service to its statement that Jesus was the revelatory climax. Is the Old Testament the model for the New Testament church? Is the 1985 report statement that the old dispensation has come to an end relevant here? Is the new only relatively new? If that is the case, then interim ethics may be acceptable. At any rate, the report seems to deny that the title Prince of Peace can be used in connection with pacifism. Of course, pacifists strongly disagree.

In the end the 1977 report's conclusion is really no different from that of 1939. There is still the accusation that pacifists abandon the vulnerable and that pacifists are mistaken. It does not seem fruitful to reiterate the same problems.

I only want to make one further point here. From the various reports, I can only deduce that there are only two positions in regard to war: either it is supported or it is not. The reports make it also clear that war is the result of our fallen world. War is the result of sin.

Christian pacifists would wholeheartedly agree with that. But they don't agree that we have only two choices, both of which contain evil. Although the reports don't state it in so many words, the reality is that the CRC advocates that it is better to choose the lesser of two evils. Pacifists, notably British Congregationalist Rev. Leyton Richards in the 1930s, suggested that God always provides more than a choice between two evils. The way of Jesus is a different way, a third option.

Some flaws in pacifism

The above objections to the various reports do not imply that pacifism is without flaws. Rather than enumerate them myself, I refer to a conversation in Rudy Wiebe's first novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962). The novel deals with Mennonites in northern Saskatchewan during World War II. Isolated, the small community seems far removed from the war's carnage, but the question how to relate to the rest of society cannot be avoided. (In many ways Dutch Calvinist immigrants would recognize themselves in this fascinating tale.) One of the young Mennonites, of conscription age, struggles with this issue, influenced by the young teacher Joseph. At one point he is asked if Joseph is right, and he answers,

"If he speaks from history, I guess he's right when he says non-resistance is possible only for a small group. But what does that say? Does what has happened in the world show us what a Christian should do? Or does the Bible?"

"But if you agree, you have to go the next step. If only the minority can say, 'It is against our conscience to fight because we must love enemies as well as friends,' and the majority must say, 'We must fight to protect pacifists so that they may have the right to think as they do,' then the majority, the non-believers, die so that the minority, the believers, may live. Who then is the martyr for the faith?"....

"Look, do you think a soldier thinks of all this when he comes round a corner and there's a German? He doesn't think. He either shoots on the spot or he's dead. That's all. War isn't one country against another. It's only, and always will be, one man killing one or more other men."

"But the principal still holds, doesn't it? In Germany no one can say, 'I refuse to join the Army.' They either join or are shot, which ends their earthly usefulness as witnesses to Christianity. If Allied soldiers did not stop the German advance, we could not live to hold our belief in Canada because Hitler would soon control us too."

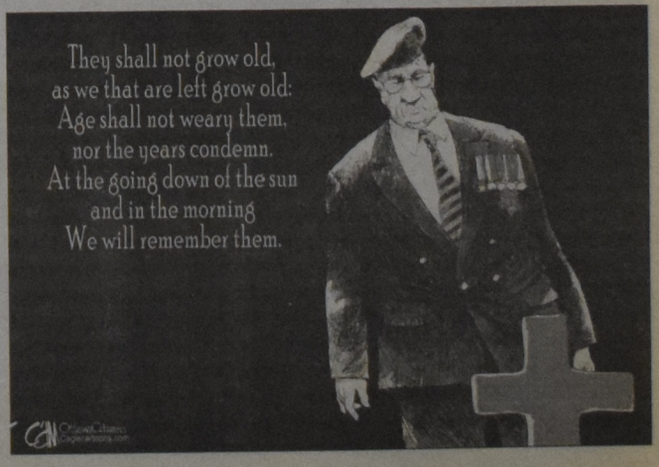
Wiebe portrays a society that, while professing pacifism, has other forms of violence that can tear a community apart. In the relationship between Mennonites and natives ("breeds") something about the nature of the church comes to the fore. At issue here is evangelism. Can natives be members of the Mennonite church? The negative attitude of the church leader suggests that they could not. Often issues are related to the nature of the church. Does the church model its ideal or the fallen nature of humans?

The issue of war and peace the new synodical committee is supposed to survey is also a question about the nature of the church. If the committee does not address this question, then the report is not worth the time and money spent on it.

Just war theory

Having suggested that the various reports suffer from sloppy research and using Wiebe's novel to point out that pacifism is not without its own problems, let me now turn to the issue of just war. In order to set the stage, allow me to introduce the classification of the war-or-peace debate by Dr. Martin Ceadel of Oxford, one of the foremost historians of pacifism, although not a pacifist himself. He suggests that there are five basic ideologies. Briefly summarized they are:

1) *Militarism*, which holds that war is necessary to human development and therefore is a positive good. In other words, all wars are justified, even aggressive ones. The abolition of war would be undesirable and detrimental to the human race and to states engaged in the survival of the fittest.
2) *Crusading*, which is a willingness to use aggressive war to promote either order or justice, but only under favorable circumstances.
3) *Defencism*, which rejects all aggressive wars, but insists that defence is always right. It supports a strong defence as a deterrence. (Dr. Ceadel's own position).
4) *Pacificism*, which holds that war can ultimately be abolished by reforms. Not only are all aggressive wars regarded as unacceptable, but also some defensive wars, but that depends on the hindrance to domestic reforms. (Dr. Ceadel's terminology is confusing; he himself normally italicizes the term in order to distinguish it from pacifism. I prefer the term *irenicism* or *paxism*).
5) *Pacifism*, which holds that participation and support for any war is impermissible.


They shall not grow old,
as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them.

It becomes quickly apparent that he does not list just war as an ideology. It's not so much a theory as a code of conduct that can be applied to several of the five categories, although not always to the same extent. In other words, the code is only of limited help in determining our position vis-à-vis war.

It's important to realize when and why the church began to accept the just war code. The code was not a Christian invention. Its origins can be traced to antiquity. Ambrose, a military officer before his election as bishop of Milan, and Augustine, bishop of Hippo and the Christian west's most influential early theologian, elaborated on this code. Synod reports refer to the traditional code, which can be traced back to Aquinas, the great medieval theologian.

Significantly, the church developed the code after it had become a powerful force in the (post)-Constantinian state. The Roman empire, based on aggression, could only continue to exist with the help of enough soldiers, including Christian soldiers. Especially after emperor Theodosius made the church a state church in 381, the church became involved in power politics. While accommodating the state, at the same time the church imposed some restrictions on soldiers and the state concerning warfare. The magisterial Lutheran and Calvinist reformations of the sixteenth century followed this Roman Catholic tradition. The CRC, an offshoot of the Calvinist reformation, not surprisingly, followed suit.

It was the social context that was the matrix for the just war code; the attempt to find biblical justification followed later. With societal changes new arguments were needed. That is also apparent in the synodical reports. In the early 1960s CRC synod was asked to prepare a report on nuclear weapons. In 1964 synod recommended a report to the congregations, but it was not accepted until 1982, with some revisions. Changed circumstances after September 2001 necessitate, as synod 2003 indicated, another view.

The state and the sword

The five points of the traditional code have in some cases been expanded to three or four times that number, partly due to the changes in time and warfare, but also due to the fact that the just war code is in itself a form of interim ethics. It is no wonder that the CRC reports have given much attention to the role of the state. While Anabaptists have usually held a negative view of the state (which made it easier to hold a pacifist position), the magisterial reformation has held a much more positive view.

Usually the latter emphasized Romans 13, although the 1977 report made some passing references to the beast and dragon of Revelation. All too glibly the notion of "power of the sword" is turned from the micro level of individual justice to the macro level of national defence. The 1977 report focuses on the sixth commandment, but ignores its own comment about gradual revelation and Jesus as its climax.

It is not without significance that the reports make little reference to Romans 12, which ends with the words "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." It seems poor exegesis to separate the two chapters. Pacifists coming out of the magisterial reformation, such as the Presbyterian Rev. Richard Roberts, one of the founders of the British FOR, tried to balance Romans 13 with Romans 12, Revelation 13, and with some other negative comments about the state. Consequently, their idea of obedience to the state, so strongly emphasized in CRC literature, is much more limited. Like so many political pacifists, they objected to state absolutism (while the CRC also objects to state absolutism, its strong emphasis on obedience comes dangerously close to it).

Problems

There are two other problems with the reports: 1) there is little distinction between state and nation; 2) there is no recognition of the modern invention of the nation-state. With an (over)emphasis on the state and downplaying of Jesus as an ethical norm, the church can only suggest an interim solution. In the process, it loses some of its prophetic voice.

According to point 7 of the 1982 report, "the *ultimate purpose* of a just war is the establishment of a lasting peace upon the foundation of justice." But without ends and means in alignment, there can be no lasting peace. Is there a real solution?

As the 1939 report already indicated, in an ideal world the ideal position would be pacifism. For a number of Christians that ideal would still hold true even in a less than ideal world. They usually realize that there are weak points in their position, but they argue that there are fewer weaknesses than in the other positions.

With weaknesses in all positions, in some cases unacceptable weaknesses, it should be clear that the new CRC committee does not have an easy task. I would like to suggest that this committee choose one of the five positions Ceadel suggested, making clear which position is unbiblical and which position, though not recommended, can find biblical support. Those positions should be carefully delineated and not suffer from the shoddy research of the previous reports. Furthermore, the new report should emphasize that those who hold the not-recommended positions are still welcome in the church. One final comment: the 2003 report question C makes only reference to US nuclear policy. That same synod objected to the report on restorative justice that there was nothing about it on the US. Why is there in question C nothing about Canada?

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Journeying through the holiday season

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

The month of December is often a time for reflection. For some of us the passing year has been good to us. For others, the year may be tinged with sadness, especially if we have experienced losses (separation, divorce, death, etc.) in our lives. When this happens, the festive season may be tinged with pain, sadness, and a sense of emptiness. Our loss might not even be recent; yet, at every holiday season we remember the times we had before.

The very idea of shopping at the mall filled with festive music and decorations can sap our energy, making us wish we could just sleep through it and wake up in January when it is all over. June Wasnick, a bereavement counsellor of the Langley Hospice Society has the following helpful suggestions for walking through this holiday season:

Be ready for some grief and pain to be part of this holiday time. A person deeply loved will certainly be deeply missed at family gatherings and special occasions. It will hurt that he or she is not physically present with you.

Listen to your heart and make a plan. The wise person inside you knows whether you need to do things the same or differently this year; knows how much time you need for solitude and for socializing; knows how much festivities you are able or willing to handle. Give yourself permission to choose, and even to change your mind in the moment.

Care for yourself, and treat yourself gently. Children have the wisdom to go in and out of their grief. Allow yourself lighter moments in the midst of your sadness. Isn't it odd how the gifts of laughter and tears often both come up in the same breath, as we are telling stories or remembering the person we love? Eat and drink wisely; rest and exercise.

Ask. Turn to others who will support your need to talk about the person who died or is now no longer part of your family life. Love is expressed most effectively in mutual service to one another. Letting your needs be known is a gift to those who love you and want to help but are not sure how.

Remember. Find meaningful ways to cherish your memories: create a new tradition (scrapbook, photo album). In case of a death put a tag on the tree and turn on a light in memory.

Cherish and nourish present blessings: the support and companionship of others, the ability to release emotions, the unique person you are with all of the inner resources that have helped you through other difficult times in your life.

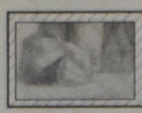
Give. Reach out to someone else. In case of a death you might make a donation in memory of the person who died. Doing what we enjoy in service to others reinforces our hope, our connection and our contribution to the larger community, reminding us that we have a place and that we belong.

Believe. Encounter your faith in God as you wrestle with your grief. Reflect on what you believe about the meaning and purpose of life, looking deeper within and outside yourself for wisdom, comfort, hope, identifying and exploring possibilities for growth and change.

We are all grievers on our journeys, each at a different time or place. My hope and prayer for each of you is that you may find unexpected blessings this holiday season as you find comfort in the company of family and friends.

Arlene Van Hove is now on sabbatical from Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Opinion



Yes ... but

Bert Hielema

Bush and the Apocalypse

When you read this, I am in the USA, St. Paul Minnesota, from where I send this column.

So Bush pulled it off: a second term.

From what I have read, moral issues gave him the edge: God, Guns and Gays.

Americans are a curious crowd. A good portion of them are fundamentalists, people like James Watt, who said at a public hearing: "Protecting natural resources is unimportant in light of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. God gives us these things to use. After the last tree is felled, Christ will come back."

At the time [20 years ago – ed] Mr. Watt was what we in Canada call 'The Minister of the Environment.' Like him, these people feel that concern for the future of our planet is irrelevant, because it has no future.

A man I know, a Christian environmentalist, was on a radio program in the South, advocating environmental protection. The callers who identified themselves as Christian accused him of being New Age. They – like James Watt – also believe that environmental destruction is to be actually welcomed – even hastened – as a sign of the coming Apocalypse.

This is not the belief of just a few fanatics. No. A 2002 Time/CNN poll found that 59 percent of Americans believe in a literal interpretation of the prophecies found in the Book of Revelation. Many think the Bible predicted the 9/11 attacks as well as the Iraq war. It's this – misplaced in my opinion – faith in the Apocalypse that's a powerful driving force in modern American politics. It got Bush II re-elected. The Republican political strategist Karl Rove mobilized 20 million fundamentalist voters to help Bush back into office and to maintain a Republican majority in Congress.

The scary thing is that, because of its power as a voting bloc, the Christian right has the ear, if not the souls, of much of America's leadership, many of whom are End-Time believers themselves who eagerly await the looming Apocalypse. That is frightening news for people like me who hope for protection of the earth, not its destruction.

I can see a similarity there with the Muslim world. As Gary Wills, a history professor, wrote, "It is often observed that enemies come to resemble each other." The American fundamental believers see current events — four hurricanes hitting Florida, gay marriages in San Francisco, the 9/11 attacks — as proof that the world is spinning out of control and that we are what dispensationalist writer Hal Lindsey calls "the terminal generation."

They see these social and environmental crises as portents of the Rapture, when born-again Christians, living and dead, will be taken up into heaven, when "all over the earth, graves will explode as the occupants soar into the heavens," preaches pastor John Hagee, of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. On the heels of that Rapture, nonbelievers left behind on earth will endure seven years of unspeakable suffering called the Great Tribulation, which will culminate in the rise of the Antichrist – the head of the U.N. as some books proclaim – and the final battle of Armageddon between God and Satan.

Many influential Republicans want to end the separation of church and state, replacing US democracy with a theocracy ruled by Old Testament law, and cutting all government social programs. They prefer to turn that work over to Christian churches, while abolishing such government functions as the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), seen to be a distraction from their goal of Christianizing America.

Among strong believers in these policies are House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas), re-elected, in spite of being accused of unethical practices, as well as Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair James Inhofe (R-Okla.). DeLay, who has considerable control over the agenda in the House, has called for "march[ing] forward with a Biblical worldview" in US politics. Inhofe, the Senate's most outspoken environmental critic, is also unwavering in his wish to remake America as a Christian state. He promised the faithful, "When we win this revolution in November, you'll be doing the Lord's work, and he will richly bless you for it!"

Neither DeLay nor Inhofe include environmental protection in "the Lord's work." Both have ranted against the Environmental Protection Agency, calling it "the Gestapo." DeLay has fought to gut the Clean Air and Endangered Species acts. He also believes that the 1948 creation of the state of Israel marked the first event in what author Hal Lindsey calls the "countdown to Armageddon." Both are committed to making that doomsday clock tick faster, speeding Christ's return. Both believe that the war between America and Iraq is the gateway to the Apocalypse!

I can't fathom how church people can view Creation as something to be despoiled on purpose. Imagine Shakespeare wanting to see his own plays thrown out, or a Bach hating his own compositions, or a Rembrandt burning his own pictures. All creators love their work. And so does God. God so loved the cosmos ... that he was willing to die for it's restoration. As a devoted environmentalist and a Christian who sincerely believes that God created and thus loves this world, and that it's our holy duty to enhance it, you can understand why a second Bush term frightens me, because the constituency to which he owes his victory is not a yielding one.

Here in St.Paul, judging by the host of Kerry/Edwards signs still on almost every lawn in this neighborhood, I have landed smack in Democratic country and feel right at home. In Canada 80 percent of the people would have, given a chance, voted for Kerry and, yes, I would have been one of them. I find it strange that people, even a week after the election, are still eager to show their political affiliation. Perhaps, judging by the letters to the editor in the local paper, it's an expression of mourning.

One thing is sure: Bush has his work cut out for him. Sometimes to get what you wish is a curse. He is reelected, but Iraq is still reeling with insurrection, part of the Muddle in the Middle East which will only grow with Arafat on death's door. Yet, at the very start of Bush's Second Coming there also is a golden opportunity to make new overtures for peace, but I am afraid that as long as Dick is Vice-President, he ain't gonna change direction. If the past is any indication, we'll see more of that confrontational stuff that has led him into so much trouble in the first place. But then, the president may surprise us.

Still, the first and foremost problem Bush faces is Iraq, and how to get out of that mess. Staying is no option. The US, in spite of all its riches, does not have the resources to continue to keep its military might there for an extended period. There are only three ways in which a US withdrawal can take place: as an early deliberate decision of the US government; at the later request of the Iraqi authorities; or ultimately chased out by Iraqi insurgents.

Getting out speedily is undoubtedly the one which would serve US, Iraqi, and world's interests best. It is also not likely to happen, because it would be interpreted as a major political defeat for the United States. The second alternative – being asked to withdraw by the Iraqi government – is also a possibility. But if the insurgency grows stronger and stronger, and becomes the de facto government of the country, Iraq is headed towards a Vietnam scenario, where the US may have to evacuate its personnel from the Green Zone in helicopters. This will be a far greater defeat than voluntary withdrawal in 2005.

With Arafat out of the way, a man who in spite of all his faults was still a stabilizing influence in that volatile region, it'll take a very wise regime to calm the troubled waters there. Bush is politically very astute. But he is not a wise man.

The next challenge, equally daunting, is the money thing. Already, even though the stock market went up right after the election, the US dollar dived. The world at large doesn't like Bush and his policies and sold the dollar, causing it to drop deeply.

No wonder. America has always been the land of superlatives. Well, it certainly has them money wise – or better, money-foolish. Record shortfall in national savings. Record current account deficit. Record levels of household debt. Record government budget deficits. Record of uninsured people. Record number of poor. Record number of millionaires.

I read an article by an economist, in which he quoted Woody Allen: "More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other to total extinction. Let's pray that we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

Stephen Roach, respected economist at Morgan Stanley, is equally pessimistic: "In my view the US economy is an accident waiting to happen."

And then there is climate change. Even the Queen of England has gotten into the act. She is understood to have asked Downing Street – Tony Blair there – to lobby the US to do something after observing the alarming impact of Britain's changing weather on her estates at Balmoral in Scotland and Sandringham in Norfolk. Highly unusual for a monarch, who normally stays above politics.

Climate change is to the twenty-first century what the nuclear arms race was to the twentieth: the overriding threat to humanity's continued existence on this planet. And it is already killing people. In the summer of 2003, some 15,000 people died in France from an unprecedented heat wave and 30,000 world-wide.

No single weather event can be definitively attributed to climate change, but such heat waves are exactly what scientists expect as warming intensifies. If climate change is not moderated, more will die in years to come, either directly, through more destructive storms and droughts, or indirectly, through declines in food production and the spread of infectious disease.

Did I mention Peak Oil? This is the challenge of challenges, most certainly to happen in Bush's new term. Good Luck, Mr. Bush. You'll need it.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ontario. His website has been updated, now including all past columns as well as other writings:
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Bulletin Bloopers

- Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.
- The Pastor will preach his farewell message after which the choir will sing: "Break Forth Into Joy."

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Classifieds

Classified Rates

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION
Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.

RATES (GST added to all rates listed)
All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) (2 " wide)
rose@christiancourier.ca
Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: $18.20 P.I.
ads@christiancourier.ca

PHOTOS
There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.

PERSONAL ADS
Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS
We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.

SUBMITTING YOUR AD
Mail: Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St
St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above

OTHER INFORMATION
a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style. b) Please provide us with clear copy. *Christian Courier* is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.

For Sale

HAMMOND THEATRE ORGAN
4000 Series. 25 note pedal board, 52 stops. Beautiful condition. $1500. Phone **1-613-966-0388**

For Rent

Take a mid-winter break in beautiful **Victoria, BC**. Visit Butchart Gardens, ski Mt. Washington, stroll the ocean beaches, go whale watching, count the flowers! West-coast style home available for rent Feb. 4 - 19.
Three bedrooms, three bathrooms, and just 10 minutes from downtown Victoria. Rate is $800 for two weeks (two week rental only please).
Call Jeff Hoogendoorn **250.474.4399** or email **victoriahoogies@hotmail.com**.

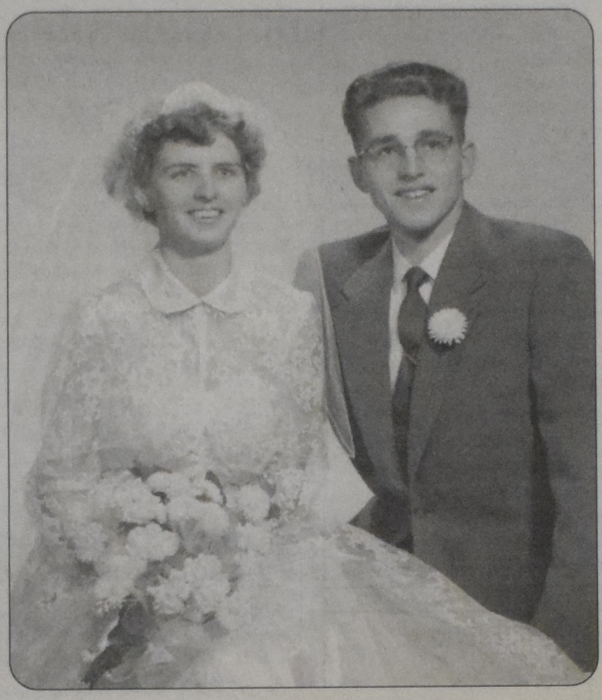
Largo, Florida Due to illness - For rent 2 bedroom 2 bathroom **mobile home** $1000 US/mo. Available Dec 1 to Feb. 28. Non-smokers please. For more details, call **705-733-8193**

Are you a student looking for a room to rent near Lakehead University in **Thunder Bay**? **Private rooms** available close to CRC and URC. Phone **807-939-2746**

Anniversary

1954 Brockville, Ontario December 9 St. Catharines, Ontario 2004

With joy and thanksgiving to God, we wish to announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents



JOHN AND GERRY MULDER

We pray that God will continue to bless them as He has so richly done throughout their marriage.
Congratulations!

With much love and joy from your children and grandchildren.
Harry & Jane Mulder – Devin, Sheena, Brianna, *Nepean, Ontario*
Henry & Sharon Mulder – Stephanie, Joel, *Bolton, Ontario*
Judy & Eric Kuipery – Johnathan, Jessica, *St. Catharines, Ontario*

Family and friends are invited to celebrate with us during an **Open House** at Trinity Christian Reformed Church, 1230 Old Martindale Rd St. Catharines, Ontario, Saturday, December 11, 2004 from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Home address: #202 – 55 Main St, St Catharines ON L2N 4T8

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Redeemer University College
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905-648-2131 ext. 4205 (Ben) stewardship@redeemer.on.ca

Obituary

1915 Gaastmeer FR Townsend, Ontario 2004

Psalm 73:23-26, 28

On October 28, 2004 our Heavenly Father took unto himself our dearly loved Mother, Grandmother & Great-grandmother

PATRICIA HOGETERP

at the age of 89 years. Loving mother of
Peter Hogeterp *Jarvis*
Martha & Louis Bill *Jarvis*
Rose & Mike De Beer *Jarvis*
Clarence & Pat Hogeterp, *Grand Rapids MI*
Hazel & Larry Schipper *Charlottetown PEI*
Loving Beppe of 19 grandchildren and 38 great-grandchildren.

Predeceased by sons Sieba & Henry, daughter-in-law Ruth Hogeterp, grandson Micheal De Beer, and great-grandchildren Wayne Hogeterp and Anneke Hogeterp

Correspondence address: Martha Bill, RR1 Jarvis ON N0A 1J0

For Sale

"The Passionate Immigrant" is the legacy of the Dutch Christian immigrant told in an engaging and enchanting way. This is your remarkable history, not to be forgotten. It makes for a wonderful Christmas gift.

To learn more about the book, please visit **www.glendadevries.com**

You can purchase it there or you can order it by sending a cheque or money order for $26.00 along with your address to:
Glenda de Vries
c/o 1494323 Ontario Inc.
250 Shields Ct Unit 15
MARKHAM ON L3R 9W7

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Email: dvanderwoerd@rossmcbride.com

Radio in het Nederlands
Saturday morning CJMR 1320 AM and 710 AM
8.00 - 8.30 am '**Zingend geloven**'
8.30 - 9.30 am ' **The Dutch Touch**'
Holland Calling :
CFRC 101.9 FM Kingston Ont.
9.00 am Saturday mornings
CJLX 92.3 FM Belleville Ont.
7.30 pm Sunday nights

Classifieds/Job Opportunities

Events

Welkom

"Hoe zal ik U ontvangen?"

will be the theme of the

Heritage Service,

Dec. 19, 2004, 2 p.m.

Zion CRC

Adelaide East and Central Park, **Oshawa.**

Pastor John Veenstra,

Mr. Jim Hoogsteen, organist.

Dutch Community Christmas Song Service

November 28

at 7:30 p.m.

Emmanuel Reformed Church,

170 Clarke St. **Woodstock.**

Rev. Roeland Hartmans.

Babysitting provided.

Refreshments.

REDEEMER'S THEATE ARTS

Dept. presents

Judith Thompson's **play**

"Perfect Pie"

November 25 - 27

Director, Raymond Louter

(Preview, Matinee & Evening Performances)

A serious, thought-provoking play for teenage & adult audiences.

Box Office 1-877-779- 0913

REDEEMER CONCERT & ALUMNI CHOIRS

present two performances of **Handel's "Messiah"** 8 p.m.

Dec. 3 at Redeemer

Dec. 4 at Centenary United Church, 24 Main St. W in Hamilton. Call: **1-877-779-0913**

Job Opportunities

Harthill
Contracting Ltd.

Concrete Forming Company in the Niagara Area looking for people experienced in concrete. Job includes laying out and pouring footings, setting walls, and pouring. Will train ambitious, individuals who are willing to learn a new trade. Experience with 6 Bar Advance Forming System, D license, and 15 tonne crane ticket an asset. May be an opportunity to work towards ownership of forming business.

3 - 4 man crew needed.

Send resume by fax of mail.

Harthill Contracting
R.R. # 8
Dunnville, Ontario
N1 A 2W7
facsimile 905-701-4347

FULL-TIME SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Trenton Christian School - Trenton, a multi-denominational school is seeking a vibrant visionary for Administrator, commencing August 2005. TCS is a CHI accredited school serving JK - Grade 8 which includes 246 students from 126 families and a faculty of 19. Qualified individuals should send their resumes, along with their philosophy of Christian Education by January 7 to:

Rob DeVries, Board Chair
Trenton Christian School
340 Second Dug Hill Rd, RR #4
Trenton ON K8V 5P7

Email - tcs@reach.net Website - www.reach.net/~tcs

FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATOR

JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL - Oakville, an interdenominational school with a diverse family base is seeking an enthusiastic visionary for principal for the 2005 - 2006 school year. JKCS is a JK - grade 8 school which includes 385 students from 214 families and a faculty of 30. Qualified individuals should send their resumes along with their philosophy of Christian Education by *November 30* to:

Laurie Atkins, Board Chair
1161 Saginaw Crescent
Mississauga Ontario L5H 3W4
Email: latkins@jkcs-oakville.org

School Address: John Knox Christian School
2232 Sheridan Garden Dr, Oakville ON L6J 7T1
905-829-8048 **Website**: www.jkcs-oakville.org

GEORGETOWN DISTRICT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is seeking applications for an **ADMINISTRATOR** to begin in August 2005. GDCS currently serves 205 students from pre-school through Grade 8. It is a fully interdenominational school, operated by the Georgetown District Christian School Society, and is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. GDCS is located in the heart of beautiful Halton Hills. Applications will be accepted until January 3, 2005. Please forward your application or inquiries to:

Wilma Grin
13106 22nd Sideroad RR#1
Georgetown Ontario L7G 4S4
905-877-8180

BULKLEY VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL,

a school of 400 students located in the scenic Bulkley Valley of B.C., invites applications for a principal at its elementary campus, effective August 1, 2005 (position involves some teaching time). This campus has approximately 175 students from K-6. Bulkey Valley Christian is a school rooted in the reformed tradition, but contains a diverse denominational mix. Applications and inquiries for this position can be forwarded to:

Attn: Irene Bakker, Board of Directors Chair
Bulkley Valley Christian School
PO Box 2117
Smithers BC V0J 2N0
Phone: **250-847-9833** Fax: 250-847-0184
Email: **bvcselem@telus.net**

CALVIN CHRISTIAN COLLEGIATE

is seeking applicants for a possible **full-time, term, Bible teaching position** for 10 to 20 weeks in the second semester of the 2004-2005 school year (beginning in February). Applicants should be able to articulate a personal statement of Christian belief and must be able to certify as a teacher in Manitoba or acquire a provisional certificate.

Please call for more information or send a resume and cover letter to:

Mr. D. Taylor, Principal,
Calvin Christian Collegiate
706 Day St, Winnipeg MB R2C 1B6
Ph. (204) 222-7910 Fax: 222-8511

The closing date for this position is December 15, 2004.

We sincerely appreciate all applications, however, only those shortlisted will be contacted.

Discovery Christian High School
seeks its first Principal

The successful applicant will be an energetic and dynamic leader who is able to:

- articulate the Christian mission of the school
- enable young people to discover their talents and opportunities
- give leadership to a growing staff and student body
- provide students with an innovative and challenging curriculum

Qualifications

- Master's degree (completed or in process)
- eligible for BC teaching certification
- administrative experience at the high school level

Discover Christian High School is a joint venture of Vancouver Christian School and John Knox Christian School. DCHS will open in September, 2005 with Grades 9-11, adding Grade 12 in 2006. The campus is located in Burnaby. Initially, the principal will assume both administrative and teaching responsibilities.

Job description available upon request. Please submit your resume, statement of faith and references by January 15, 2005 to:

Mr. Gerald Ebbers, Search Committee
#56 - 1973 Winfield Drive
Abbotsford BC V3G 1K6

ABBOTSFORD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL JOB POSTINGS

Abbotsford Christian School, located in the Fraser Valley, is a well established, interdenominational school of 1000 students in three campuses: Elementary (pre K – grade 5), Middle (6 – 8) and Secondary (9 – 12). We are inviting applications for the following positions:

SUPERINTENDENT

This is a new position at ACS. The successful applicant will be the chief administrator of the school system and be directly responsible to the Board of Directors. This person will be:

- a mature, committed Christian with proven leadership abilities
- a leader with a strong vision for Christian education who is able to respond to current educational trends and apply them in light of the biblical perspective at ACS
- a visionary who can provide leadership in strategic planning and implement such plans
- a team player who will motivate, encourage, challenge, hold accountable and empower the principals and other senior administrators
- an articulate spokesperson for ACS

POSSIBLE OPENING FOR A SECONDARY PRINCIPAL

This person will be an experienced, qualified and enthusiastic leader who is deeply committed to Christian education and is excited about working as part of a leadership team.

Application deadline: JANUARY 5, 2005

All positions commence August 2005. Applicants must be eligible for a valid BC College of Teacher's Certificate and meet the requirements of the ACS Employment Contract.

Please send resume, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian Education and credentials to:

SEARCH COMMITTEE
Abbotsford Christian School
35011 Old Clayburn Road
Abbotsford BC V2S 7L7

ACS

Contact: Sharon Vandenberg, Board Chair, at 604-820-0463, email: esvan@telus.net

*** *See more job opportunities on page 22* ***

Check out our website www.christiancourier.ca for job opportunities recently published in the Christian Courier

Job Opportunities/Classifieds

Parkview Meadows Retirement Village

a Christian Retirement Facility, with 30 rental apartments, 35 life-lease apartments and a 29 bed assisted living area, is in the process of constructing a 64 bed long term care addition.

The Board of Directors is currently seeking applications for the position of

Chief Executive Officer

The successful candidate will be responsible for the leadership, administration, organization and management of the entire operations.

Qualifications include:

- Certified Administrator with a degree in Health Services Management, Social Services, Accounting and /or Public/Business Administration
- 3 to 5 years management experience in a long term care setting
- excellent interpersonal -, creative problem solving-, conflict resolution-, administrative- and leadership skills
- experience in labour relations and financial administration.

Interested candidates should forward their resume in confidence, by November 29, 2004, to

The Chairman of the Selection Committee,
Parkview Meadows Retirement Village,
72 Town Centre Drive, Townsend, Ontario, N0A 1S0.
Fax (519) 587-5692, e-mail: info@parkviewmeadows.ca

We thank all applicants for their interest.
Only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

We're looking for a new Pastor.

COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
of Richmond Hill, Ontario
is looking for a new **Pastor.**

We're a unique urban church enjoying some creative approaches to ministry and worship and we're trying to find the right person capable of challenging, inspiring and leading us to the next level in the development of our congregation. Someone who can build on the work completed in the last 10 years and is open to new ways of ministry and serving our congregation and community.

For more information,
please contact us, in complete confidence,
at 905.884.3005 Ext 29
or e-mail pastorsearch@community-church.ca

www.community-church.ca

Dordt College

Faculty Positions

August 2005

Dordt College is seeking applications in the following areas:

Business Administration
Human Resources and other fields.

Communication
The department is especially interested in applicants with background and expertise in visual communication.

Education
Introductory, upper-level (elementary and secondary methods).

Health, Physical Education, Recreation
Introductory and upper-level courses and some coaching.

Mathematics
Introductory and intermediate-level courses.

Music
Preference for organ, church music and music history.

To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College, 498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center IA 51250-1697
Facsimile: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu

Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

Director of Finance and Administration

The Institute for Christian Studies is seeking a Director of Finance and Administration. This person is responsible for managing the financial affairs of the Institute, including preparing the annual budget, providing reports, and developing policies and procedures. The Director also supervises the Institute's administrative functions, including human resources, information technology, and facilities.

The Director of Finance and Administration reports to the President, and is a member of the Senior Management Team.

Essential qualifications include: commitment to the mission and goals of the Institute; progressive financial management experience; professional designation (CA, CMA, CGA); experience in human resources management; knowledge of information technology in a network environment; and a broad understanding of facilities management; excellent interpersonal, communication, and organizational skills.

For additional information about ICS, please see our website at www.icscanada.edu.

Please send cover letter and resume by mail, fax or email to:
Dr. Harry Fernhout, President, ICS, 229 College Street, Toronto, ON M5T 1R4.
Fax: 416 979-2332
Email: moulton@icscanada.edu

ICS

Deadline for applications is November 30, 2004. We thank all candidates in advance for their interest, however, only those candidates selected for interviews will be contacted.

THE LIVING WORD

Sermons for reading services

This is the last year of the printed sermons.
For a supply of specially priced back copies contact:
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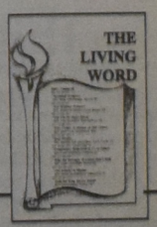
Woodstock, On N4V 1G1
Phone: (519)-539-2117
Email:
rvanderploeg@execulink.com

Sermons also available online at: www.crcna.org/whatweoffer/resources/sermons/



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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 19 **Annual Dutch Christmas Hymn Sing,** 7.30 p.m. at Holland Christian Homes, Heritage Hall, **Brampton**, John Visser, Organist; Lenny Dykstra, song leader; John and Marion Lekx, duet; Johanna Bernard, soloist; Rev. Jacob Kuntz, meditation.

Nov 25 - 27 **Redeemer's Theate Arts** Dept. presents Judith Thompson's **play** "Perfect Pie" Director, Raymond Louter (Preview, Matinee & Evening Performances) A serious, thought-provoking play for teenage & adult audiences. Box Office 1-877-779- 0913 for tickets, times and play synopsis.

Nov 27 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel** CRC, 17 Robinson Road, off Hwy. #3 **Dunnville** (Freewill Offering) Info:(905) 387-0235

Nov 28 **Dutch Community Christmas Song Service** at 7:30 p.m. Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. **Woodstock**. Rev. Roeland Hartmans. Babysitting provided. Refreshments.

Dec 3 & 4 **Redeemer Concert & Alumni Choirs** present two performances of Handel's "Messiah". 8pm Dec. 3 at Redeemer and Dec. 4 at Centenary United Church 24 Main St. W in Hamilton. Box Office 1-877-779-0913

Dec 12 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

Dec 19 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 9 Victoria Street North, **Goderich.** Info: (519) 637-4357

Dec 19 **Heritage Service**, 2 p.m Theme "Hoe zal ik U ontvangen?" at the Zion CRC Adelaide East and Central Park, **Oshawa**. Pastor John Veenstra, Mr. Jim Hoogsteen, organist.

2005

Apr 9 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel** CRC, 716 Classic Drive, **London** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

May 1 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

"...excellent scholarship which is relevant culturally relevant."

-Ronald J. Sider, author, *Rich Christians In The Age of Hunger*

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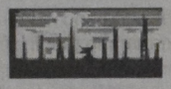
THE BACK TO GOD HOUR



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Radio- From Coast to Coast

BRITISH COLUMBIA
- Burns Lake – CFLD ..... 9:15 am 1400
- Osoyoos – CJOR ..... 8:00 am 1490
- Penticton – CKOR ..... 8:00 am 800
- Port Alberni – CJAV ..... 7:00 pm 1240
- Prince George – CIRX ... 7:00 am 94.3
- Princeton – CHOR ..... 8:00 am 1400
- Smithers – CFBV ..... 9:15 am 1230
- Summerland – CHOR .... 8:00 am 1450
- Vernon – CJIB ..... 9:30 pm 94

ALBERTA
- Brooks – CIBQ ..... 8:30 am 1340
- Ft. McMurray – CJOK .. 8:30 am 1230
- High River – CHRB ..... 6:30 pm 1140
- Edmonton – CJCA ..... 6:00 pm 930
- Westlock – CFOK ..... 7:30 am 1370

SASKATCHEWAN
- Estevan – CJSL ..... 8:00 am 1280
- Weyburn – CFSL ..... 8:00 am 1190

MANITOBA
- Altona – CFAM ..... 9:30 am 950
- Steinbach – CHSM 9:30 am 1250
- Winnipeg – CKJS ..... 9:00 am 810

ONTARIO
- Atikokan – CFAK ..... 9:30 am 1240
- Chatham – CFCO ..... 6:30 am 630
- Guelph – CJOY ..... 8:30 am 1460
- Hamilton – CHAM 7:30 am 820
- Kapuskasing – CKAP ... 7:00 am 580
- London – CKSL ..... 7:00 am 1410
- Oshawa – CKDO ..... 8:00 am 1350
- Owen Sound – CFOS .... 7:00 am 560
- Pembroke – CHVR..... 10:00 am 96.7
- Sarnia – CHOK ..... 7:30 am 1070
- Stratford – CJCS ..... 8:45 am 1240
- Tilsonburg – CKOT ..... 9:02 am 101.3
- Windsor – CKLW ..... 7:30 am 800
- Wingham – CKNX ..... 10:30 am 920
- Woodstock – CJFH ..... 7:30 am 94.03

NEW BRUNSWICK
- Saint John – CHSJ ..... 9:00 am 94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
- Charlottetown – CFCY .. 7:00 am 630

NOVA SCOTIA
- Bridgewater – CKBW ... 7:30 am 1000
- Digby – CKDY ..... 6:00 am 1420
- Halifax – CFDR ..... 8:30 am 780
- Liverpool – CKBW ..... 7:30 am 94.5
- Kentville – CKEN ..... 8:30 am 1490
- Middleton – CKAD ..... 8:30 am 1350
- New Glasgow – CKEC .. 7:30 am 1320
- Shelburne – CKBW ..... 7:30 am 93.1
- Sydney – CJCB ..... 7:00 am 1270
- Weymouth – CKDY ..... 8:30 am 103.1
- Windsor – CFAB ..... 8:30 am 1450

TELEVISION ***Primary Focus***

ON CTS Sat. - 7:30pm

AB Lethbridge - CJIL Thurs.- 9:00pm

Kids Corner Radio

ALBERTA
- Drayton Valley . CIBW 92.9 FM ..... Sun. 8:30 am
- High River/Calgary CHRB 1140 AM...Sun. 4:30pm
- Nordegg CHBW 93.9 FM. ..... Sun. 8:30 am
- Rocky Mtn.House CHBW 94.5 FM ... .Sun. 8:30 am

BRITISH COLUMBIA
- Prince Rupert .. CIAJ 100.7 FM ..... Sat. 10 am

MANITOBA
- Altona CFAM 950 AM ..... Sun. 4 pm
- Steinbach CHSM 1250 AM ..... Sun. 4 pm

NOVA SCOTIA
- Bridgewater CKBW 1000 AM ..... Sun. 5:30 am

ONTARIO
- Oshawa CKDO 1350 AM ..... Sat. 8 am
- Woodstock CJFH 94.3 FM ..... Sat. 8 am

SASKATCHEWAN
- Estevan CJSL 1280 AM ..... Sun. 7 am
- Weyburn CJSL 1190 AM ..... Sun. 7 am

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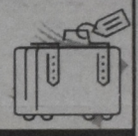

** prices are per person, taxes not included*

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60th Anniversary Concert

Celebrating the Liberation of Holland by the Canadians

Liberation Choir
Guelph Symphony Orchestra

Saturday May 7th, 2005
Hamilton Place
7:30 PM

Directors: Willem Van Suijdam/Simon Irving
Tickets: $20, $30, $40 Available From Choir Members/Box Office/www.organs.ca
Organizing: The Music Group Productions Incorporated

News

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Faith Alive Christian Resources reported that sales of its Sunday School materials have increased by 40 percent over the same period last year. The increase coincides with the introduction of the new *Walk With Me* curriculum, which was launched in July.

"We've never had a curriculum get such a positive response in such a short time," said Gary Mulder, executive director of Faith Alive. "It's truly remarkable – especially given recent trends."

This comes at a time when many denominationally-owned publishers have been losing sales to other large publishers. "There's no question that many of our members have lost ground in recent years," says Alan Meyer, executive director of the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers' Association. "Declining curriculum sales has been a hot topic at most of our meetings."

Mulder says the success of *Walk With Me* shows that churches do want a curriculum that fits their theology. But they also want one that has solid pedagogy, engaging design, and is easy to teach. "They don't want to sacrifice quality for theology. They want both."

In the case of *Walk With Me*, that meant developing a curriculum that was engaging – yet stayed true to its Reformed/Presbyterian roots. "We've added colorful leader guides and flashy student pieces," said Ruth VanderHart, managing editor, "but the belief system presented in the curriculum is still by far the most important thing."

That belief system, Mulder argues, is unique to each curriculum on the market. "There's a false notion that all Sunday school curriculums teach the same thing. Yes, they all teach the gospel message and for that we're thankful. But in 10 years of Sunday school, children also learn how to interpret and apply that message to their lives and to the world around them. That's where huge differences can exist from one curriculum to the next."

That distinctiveness appeals to a wider audience than just the Christian Reformed churches that funded the development of *Walk With Me*. Churches from various Reformed and Presbyterian denominations appreciate its approach and, in fact, make up more than half of the total sales. "It's an excellent curriculum," says Jeff Japinga, minister for education and faith development for the Reformed Church in America. "I'm pleased that such a wide variety of our congregations are using it."

Walk With Me also is endorsed by Presbyterians for Renewal (PFR), an organization of about 3,000 churches within the Presbyterian Church USA. "We looked at everything on the market and nothing came close to *Walk With Me*," says Meri MacLeod, PFR board member and a professor of education at Western Theological Seminary. "From both theological and educational perspectives, it's outstanding. That's why we chose to recommend it for our churches."

Faith Alive is confident that other churches will agree with that assessment. "The growth is strong," says Mulder, "but when you look at the total number of Reformed and Presbyterian churches, the potential is even greater. As more churches find out about this curriculum over the coming months, we expect the trend will continue."

Details about the Walk With Me curriculum can be found at www.WalkWithMeOnline.org

Faith Alive Christian Resources is a not-for-profit publisher based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that specializes in ministry resources for Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Product areas include Sunday school curriculum, youth resources, small group Bible studies, worship resources, and materials for other church-based ministries. Faith Alive is a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, although the majority of its sales are to churches from other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. www.faithaliveresources.org

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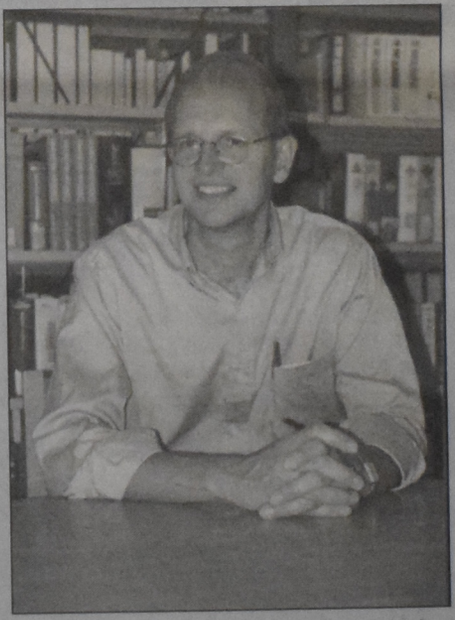
Hans Boersma appointed to the James. I. Packer Chair of Theology of Regent College



Dr. Hans Boersma, an expert in worldview studies, will officially assume his new position at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C. in September, 2005. He is currently the Associate Professor of Religious and Worldview Studies at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, Canada, where he has taught since 1999.

The Packer Chair of Theology at Regent College was established by the many admirers of J.I. Packer in the hope of extending the biblical, evangelical and Reformation-oriented theological emphases characteristic of his teaching and writing.

Born in the Netherlands, Boersma studied teaching and journalism before majoring in history at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, where he graduated at the top of the class. The son of a pastor, Boersma then attended the seminary of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario, with an eye to becoming a missionary. However, under the teaching of Jelle Faber, he became interested in historical and systematic theology and pursued a Master of Theology degree at the University of Utrecht, Netherlands. He continued his doctoral work there – focusing on Richard Baxter's doctrine of justification – and graduated in 1993 as Doctor of Theology.

As the current appointee to the Geneva Chair for Reformational Worldview Studies at Trinity Western, Dr. Boersma is involved in teaching courses in worldview studies as well as in researching how Christian worldview thinking can impact society.

At Trinity he organized the popular annual "Lamblight Lectures" which drew prominent lecturers such as Marva Dawn, Jeremy Begbie, Robert Webber and Miroslav Volf from well outside the region.

Dr. Boersma's books include: *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement* Tradition (2004); *Richard Baxter's Understanding of Infant Baptism* (2002); and *Living in the LambLight: Christianity and Contemporary Challenges to the Gospel* (editor, 2001).

Dr. Boersma has headed the educational programs of five different churches. Currently, he is an elder in the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Langley, British Columbia. He also served as a pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Aldergrove, B.C. 1994-98 before becoming a research scholar for the Geneva Society for Reformational Worldview Studies.